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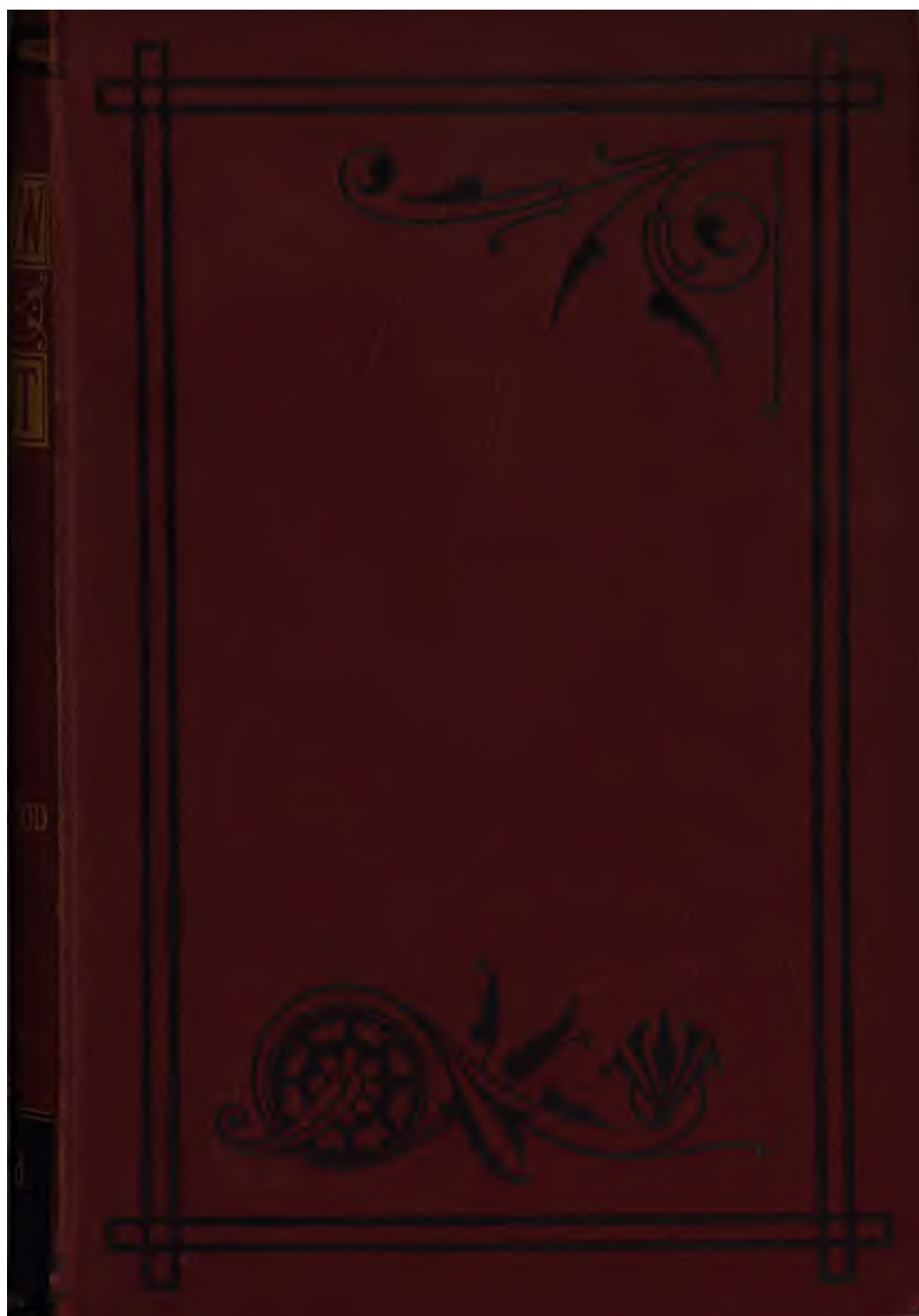
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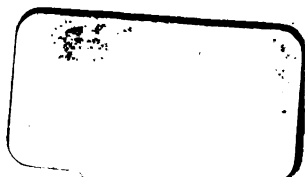
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BELOW THE SALT.

A Novel.

BY
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AUTHOR OF
"ROSEWARN," "SABINA," "ON CREDIT," "WILD WEATHER,"
"RULING THE ROAST," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. I.



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BELOW THE SALT.

CHAPTER I.

“So gay the husband, and so sad the wife,
What can result but matrimonial strife?”

It was morning at the vicarage of Birchland, a dreary morning, with rain beating against the large window of the room which Mr. Petrel had added to the small house which was his lawful abode, but which was too confined for his numerous family. Many of these olive branches surrounded the breakfast table. Mrs. Petrel made the tea, and then suddenly left the room.

“Just like your mother,” said the Reverend Jasper Petrel, “she *must* take the letter-bag herself. So mysterious!”

Mrs. Petrel, dripping with rain-drops, entered, bearing the letter-bag.

"The paper, if you please!" cried her husband, indicating a great contempt for epistolary correspondence.

His wife gave it to him, and a printed notice that the next meeting of magistrates would be on such and such days. She drew several letters towards her plate, and sat down with a depressed aspect. Mr. Petrel looked up stealthily from his paper.

"You don't seem over anxious to read your letters, though you are always so keen about getting them the moment they are brought up the gravel path."

"No, I am not anxious, I know that they contain only bills or receipts."

There was a silence, broken only by the expressions of hunger or thirst from the younger children.

"More bread and butter! More milk! Jemima, you need not push so!"

Mrs. Petrel longed for sympathy, and had not in the space of twenty-one years found out that she would not receive any, however

skilfully she demanded it. She looked up at her husband.

"It is so long since we heard from Edgar!" she said.

"Well, my dear," replied her cheerful mate, "it was your own doing, sending him to sea. I never asked you to find a profession for Edgar. I am sure you could not have found a worse one than the navy. A fine sum I have had to pay for his outfit, and no end of money for his allowance, since he has been in the 'Day Star.'"

Mrs. Petrel said nothing, but she thought a good deal. If the outfit had been a difficulty, it was she who had met it, and paid it off by instalments. The same ingenuity contrived the sixty pounds yearly sent to young Edgar for clothes and pocket money.

Mrs. Petrel could be silent for the moment, but she bided her time, feeling that the argument could be taken up at any period when the children had finished slopping and swallowing their tea and Mr. Petrel had pushed his cup and saucer away. She waited till he took his hat and had lighted his cigar in the kitchen, as the storm of rain had ceased, and

the gravel soon dried. She followed him to the walled garden, where no prying parishioner could interfere with the quiet enjoyment of the clerical indulgence, no chawbacon inhale the tell-tale perfume, and calculate that the threepence daily spent by the parson on his Havannah would go far to feed and clothe one of the numerous brood at home clamouring for bread.

"What is it?" said Mr. Petrel, somewhat testily, seeing the pertinacious countenance and precise figure of his mate approaching. "What do you want, my dear?" he said, speaking a second time, more guardedly in tone.

"I wish to say a few words to you, Jasper. It is not fair to make assertions before the children which may lead them to judge me unjustly."

"Now, that is just like you, Margaret, always thinking that the children take notice of what passes between us; they think of nothing but their bread and butter."

"I think you are mistaken; but I wish to know in what manner you have suffered from Edgar's going into the navy. Have you had

to put down your dog-cart ? Have you not had enough of food and clothing ? Have you gone without your usual amount of coats and boots ?”

“ My dear !” replied her husband, “ I wonder you don’t perceive that if you abstract sixty pounds yearly from a limited income, something must be gone without. I have no doubt that my wine and brandy has been inferior to what I generally drink, though I have not been able as yet to detect it, and if you had not alienated that sixty pounds a year, by giving it to that boy, who never cared a straw for *you*, you might have provided a haunch of venison or a quart or two of turtle soup occasionally for me.”

“ Remember,” said the wife, grieved and nettled at the assertion that Edgar did not care for her, “ your son must be fed somewhere, and clothed also. Sixty pounds a year is not an extravagant sum to pay for the purpose, and you would not have agreed long together. Whenever he was at home in the Christmas holidays, you said you were always stumbling over the boy’s long legs, which he seemed to stick out before the fire for the ex-

press purpose of making a paternal holocaust. But I wish he would write."

"I suppose," said her husband, "you think that, like a smaller child, if he be quiet he must be in mischief. There is no war now, and if he had fallen overboard, the captain would have given us the intelligence. Come, old girl, cheer up! Nought is never in danger!"

And Mrs. Petrel was cheered.

"A merry heart goes all the way,
A sad one tires in a mile-a,"

she said, trying to smile.

"Of course! Look at me!" cried her husband, and smiling still more, Margaret obeyed him, as if she did not already know "every line and trick of his sweet favour."

She saw a tall, broad-chested man, of brilliant fairness and bright colour, his features almost too delicate for his size; with small, bright eyes, set with laughter-telling wrinkles, soft brown wavy hair, rather deficient on the broad brow and the top of the head.

"Now," said her husband, "is this palaver concluded?"

He held his half smoked cigar in one hand, and the *Times* newspaper in the other.

"You want to get rid of me," suggested the wife.

"By no means," said the husband, scoffingly, "only cigars once lighted are like men in love—leave them alone, and they burn themselves out very swiftly, and if they are cared for and encouraged, why they burn all the faster."

That cigar smoking was a grief to the wife ; one of her motives for wishing her son to be separated from his home, was a dread lest, boy-like, he should adopt some of his father's self-indulgent habits. She was quite willing to live on drumsticks of fowls and turkeys with her girls, for her husband's sake, but she foresaw that two men in the house, both refusing to eat of any but the best slices, and to drink aught but the finest flavoured wine, would be more than her patience or their joint income could support.

Now that her boy never came home in the holidays—those fearful three months cut out of the comfort of the year to parents and sisters—she had become anxious about him. Perhaps, as Mr. Petrel suggested, she feared

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he was getting into mischief. He had written home about once a month at first, then the letters came once in two months, then they dwindled to two in the course of the year. The money was always paid to the agent of the captain, so Edgar was not bound to acknowledge it. Probably he was not aware when it was paid. Very soon he would be coming home, his ship being about to be paid off. It had been out longer than the allotted three years. Margaret thought with dismay of the likelihood of Edgar's remaining at home unemployed for months, and her heart sank within her.

"It's a fearful thing," she said, "to anticipate the delight of having my firstborn at home for so long a period. I wonder if every mother longs to turn out the elder nestlings," and she thought with dismay that two new babies, and the increased size of the elder ones, had made it necessary to occupy the little room Edgar used to call his own, and the chamber long dignified by the name of the spare bedroom, after it had become over full.

At length the "Day Star" was signalled

as having arrived in Plymouth Sound to be paid off, the crew with a clean bill of health. Margaret had an old friend at the Admiralty. She wrote to him and entreated that Midshipman Petrel might have another ship found for him. Soon after there came a letter from the sailor, stating that he was appointed to the "Isis," and should like to come home for a few days to see them once more before he left England for years.

Of course, the prospect of a short visit made Margaret eager to be hospitable in thought and act. The spare room must be cleared of its inmates; the stray frocks and gowns which had meandered into the wardrobe and chest of drawers meant for a stranger, had to be wrapped in a sheet, and deposited on the floor of a windowless attic; the two young ladies who had occupied the state chamber had to have beds made up on sofas, brought into the nursery, at which they grumbled considerably, and as the clothes fell off the first night, before the nurse had thought of uniting the two, the young ladies had something to grumble at in red eyes, and sore noses and throats.

He came, this stranger youth, who had not

been seen by his family since he left them, having just passed his examination as a naval cadet. Margaret had contrived to keep him at sea from his fourteenth to his eighteenth year. He left home a boy: he returned a very handsome, thoughtful-looking youth, with the polish of a gentleman, and a chivalric feeling of devotion towards women of all ages. His father was exceedingly proud of him, and his eyes stole from the chapter of the Old Testament which made the first lesson on the Sabbath day of his son's short stay at Birchland, to see if the neighbouring farmers were looking at Edgar.

They waited in the churchyard to make their congratulations, backed by some uncomplimentary additions.

"Glad to see Master Edgar is come home. It is full time, I should think, for he must have nigh forgot you all."

Another cried, "A fine, personable young fellow! He don't favour (*i.e.* resemble) *you*, sir."

He did not resemble either his father or mother. Margaret, who looked at him with admiration, mingled with respect, fancied she

saw a likeness in her son to a picture of her grandfather, but as no one is flattered by being told they resemble any one else, the mother said nothing about it.

The young ladies, aged ten and twelve years, almost forgave the handsome brother who occupied their bed, notwithstanding their nightly sufferings from hard sofas and their daily sneezings. At length the brother departed. Margaret saw with a feeling of jealousy how much the youth preferred the jovial father to herself. He had ever been the one to give an indulgence, and she to refuse one—the cumulative feeling of repulsion remained, though the facts were blurred in the mists of the past.

In his boyhood it was Margaret who made him learn his Latin grammar, and piloted him through the difficulties of the rule of three and practice when preparing for his examination as naval cadet, yet not the less did she provide him with every conceivable comfort for his voyage. He was gone, and his last look was given to his father, and Margaret saw it, and was sad. It is not those who act rightly who are most

loved ; they receive respect, and must forego affection.

Margaret had no time to waste on sentiment ; there were the girls to be put back into the deserted room, the wardrobes to be re-arranged, the dinner to be ordered. She comforted herself that she had carefully darned all Edgar's socks, and sewed his buttons on with requisite firmness—she could do no more. Her husband had asked her for five pounds from the household accounts to give Edgar on his departure, not choosing to deprive himself of a case of some prime cigars which he had promised himself. She had meant to make this little present herself, and had had to give up the idea of a new church-going dress for that purpose, but, of course, if her husband wanted the money he must have it. So Edgar thought his father kind and liberal, and his mother, as usual, always fretting over expenditure, and never having a pound to spare for her son.

Edgar pleased her. He did not smoke, he did not drink ; seemingly his ideas had become very strict on such subjects. Mrs. Petrel liked half a glass of thin home-brewed

beer for her luncheon ; her son looked at her with such distaste as she drank it, that she answered his stern gaze with one of smiling inquiry.

"Mother, I cannot endure to see a lady drink beer," he said.

"Then I will not vex you, Edgar," she replied, and sent away the half-enjoyed tumbler.

Edgar seemed to think his father was privileged to drink and smoke as he pleased, and looked on him as lovingly when thus employed as when he was conversing in his usual careless drollery.

Edgar was very sad on leaving home ; he had none of the traditional buoyant spirit of a "middy." When he was gone, Mr. Petrel walking up and down the garden with his wife and, smoking his cigar, said—

"A queer fellow that ! he won't drink, he won't smoke, he won't swear, nor bet ; little sins, little extravagances, are not in his way. When he does a wrong thing, heaven and earth ! won't it be a whopper !"

"I don't see that at all," said Mrs. Petrel, angrily. "Why should Edgar do wrong ? I

consider it very much to a young man's credit that he does not smoke, or bet, or drink."

"Certainly, certainly, my dear Margaret; only somehow those are the tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin, and men who do those kind of things fritter away their sins in trivialities, and neglect the weightier matters of unlawfulness. Pour all the rain from the heavens into a narrow channel, and the channel becomes deep."

"By which I suppose you mean to say that we may expect to hear that Edgar has forged the captain's signature to a cheque, or is suspected of having pushed the senior middy overboard. Really, Mr. Petrel, you talk nonsense sometimes! It is only because you know that you ought not to smoke and drink as you do."

"Don't be personal, my dear," said Mr. Petrel, and he chose from his leather case one of the crispest of cigars, and lighted it after flinging away the remains of the previous one. "There! I should have been contented with one, only you were impertinent, so I had to take another to show how little I value your opinion."

With this very marital rebuke, to which the wife was too prudent to reply, we will leave the pair, lest a worse thing should befall her.

CHAPTER II.

“That true and generous love has his sole flights
Must be allowed—in visions it delights ;
But in its loftiest flight, its wildest dream,
Has something in it that commands esteem.”

THE “Isis” did not sail when she was expected to do so. It was found that she had only been patched up, and wanted thorough and extensive repairs. Edgar might have had leave for asking, but he knew that it would be useless to return to Birchland Vicarage when he had said his adieux and received them. It would be too aggravating to the maternal feelings, he suspected, if he should a second time displace those two red-nosed girls from the spare bedroom, and that not for a few nights, but for a period varying from six weeks to two months. He applied

for and obtained leave, and hiring a little boat, he went off on a coasting expedition, sometimes drawing it upon a solitary beach, and sleeping under its shelter, sometimes remaining a few days in any small hamlet, where a few pence remunerated the cottagers for the potatoes and fish which supplied their common food.

It was on one of these occasions that as Edgar was drawing his boat up on the higher sands, he saw a girl looking at him. It was twilight, but one glance showed him that she was beautiful, and afraid of him. Her path seemingly lay between him and the cliff towards which he was dragging his boat. She showed the vacillation of her thought by stopping and looking back. On the other side of Edgar was a narrow path up the steep ascent of cliff. By the way she had come the advancing waves were obliterating her footsteps. She could not round the rocks with safety. Pleasance had the instinctive dread of men and boys which a half-grown cat feels of a terrier. Deeds of terror-silenced outrage were whispered amongst the women on that wild coast, and Pleasance's cheeks grew pale when

she found herself within a few inches of the stranger. '

"Will you let me pass, sir?" she asked, tremulously.

Edgar smiled, but held his arms extended.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

She pointed up the cliff.

"But it is not safe; it is too dark to climb by this light."

"Grannie lives there," the girl said, gathering courage from the gentle tone of the boy's voice, and the sense of protection afforded by the thought of "grannie."

"On the top of the cliff?"

"No, sir; not quite at the top; at the side, below the top. Please to let me pass."

"You shall go if you give me a kiss," cried the young sailor, clasping his arms round her.

The girl struggled and remonstrated, finally escaping from him on the side where her homeward path lay. Edgar heard a soft sob or two coming on the breeze as she ascended.

"I wonder if I shall see her again. I am sorry I frightened her. She is beautiful!" said the youth, rolling himself in a boat-cloak preparatory to his rest.

Pleasance went up the cliff, and entered the cottage where her granddame was crooning over a piece of lighted turf which, as she blew it into momentary flame, cast a red light over her wrinkled face.

"I thought you were never coming, child ! What made you so late ?"

"It was the minister's discourse was so long, grannie," said the girl, with a voice breathless and tremulous from her late adventure and her hurried ascent.

She stretched herself on the bed, from which she could see the moon climbing over white fringed clouds, and thought of the handsome boy from whose clasping arms she had struggled a few hours before. Should she ever see him again ? No doubt he would go away at morning light !

She slept at length, but awoke just as the saffron line in the horizon heralded the approach of day. She arose, saw that her grandmother still slept, and dressing herself in the garments which she had worn on the preceding evening, which was Sunday, she stole down the cliff path with feet that were as unsteady from heart-beat of expectation as they

had been on the preceding evening from a different cause. When she reached the sands, she expected—hoped, perhaps—to see the young sailor asleep in his boat. She wanted to observe his face by daylight. And now the sun arose and tinted the top of the waves with rosy light, and set all the dark rocks glittering; but the youth and the boat were gone!

Pleasance sat down on one of the boulders and cried. She felt as if her intention of seeing him asleep had been guessed at, and that he, having gone on purpose, was now laughing at her. She was not much over fifteen, and had never loved or been loved before. That snatched kiss had been the first ever stolen from or given by those innocent lips. She sat wiping her eyes with the back of her little brown hand, and looking sadly at the waves as they broke on the sand and rolled themselves towards her feet. Presently she screamed aloud, a scream that was answered by flocks of sea-birds; for an arm was thrown round her, clasping her where she sat.

“My pretty!” cried Edgar, kissing away her tears. “Why are you crying?”

"I—I—thought," she said, "I fancied—that you were quite gone!"

"Should you have been so very sorry?" the boy asked; and Pleasance turned her beautiful face to him and smiled.

He thought her lovelier than he had done the previous evening, for her skin, where it was not embrowned by summer sun, was of that dazzling whiteness which often accompanies the hair of a rich chestnut tint which looks golden where the sun strikes the extremities. Her eyes were of a brilliant hazel, and showed lovelier through her tears and blushes, and now they sparkled with her smile.

The pair sat down to breakfast on hard eggs and bread and butter, after Edgar had lighted a fire in a sheltered nook far up in the dry sand, and heated some coffee. She was every way charming to him. Her voice was the softest he ever heard, and the absence of any aspirates, at which his taste would, under other circumstances, have revolted, seemed to give her articulation a peculiar sweetness.

She told him her brief history. How her father worked in the mines, and had built the cottage in the cliff because it was nobody's

land, neither on the surface nor in the sea ; that his mother lived with them, her father having built her a little room to herself on the rocky platform ; that her father had been killed by the falling in of part of a shaft, and her mother died from the shock of seeing him brought to the surface, leaving Pleasance an infant of a few moments of age only, to be brought up by her granddame.

All this, and much more, she related to her new acquaintance ; and now she was a bucking girl, and sat with a great number of others at a mine washing the dirt from the copper ore ; also that she had worn her new hat for the first time yesterday.

"That is it, is it ?" asked Edgar. "I hope I did not break any of the brim just now or last night."

The girl did not like to be reminded of the last night's kiss which had so haunted her, so she went on about the hat.

"Jim Newmen worked on the farm—Mr. Carthew's farm, near Wheal Vedras. You know," she said, nodding to Edgar.

He nodded also, but knew as much as the man in the moon.

"Well, Jim Newmen picked me out four bundles of the finest and whitest straw that I might plait myself this hat."

"Oh, indeed!" said Edgar, thinking he would like to strangle the aforesaid Jim. "I suppose he asked for a kiss in payment?"

"No; he did not," said Pleasance, simply.

"If he had, I suppose you would have given him one."

"Perhaps I should *then*," said the girl, slowly.

"Why not now?" cried the young man, still chafing.

"Because"—and she stopped and looked up with a frightened consciousness in her eyes—"because you have kissed me now, and I could not let any one else touch me."

Edgar had but one answer to make to this, and it was too eloquent to be recorded.

"What did you give Jim Newmen for the straw?" Edgar asked.

"Grandmother gave him a shilling for the four bundles; they sell at sevenpence in the shops—not half so good."

Then she told him what wages she received, and how many hours she worked. It was not much to make, she admitted; "but Mr.

Pike, the manager—that's our master—often gives me a sixpence over."

"Why does he do that?" asked the jealous lover. "Do you work more than the other girls?"

"No—no," Pleasance admitted.

"Why should he give you more money than the others? I don't like that."

"Do you not?" asked the girl. "I do—so much. He is very kind, for he turns out the other girls that I may sit where the sun can't scorch my pretty face, he says."

Edgar sprung up and stamped angrily on wet pebbles.

"Who is this man? Let me look at him."

"Oh, dear!" cried the girl, "I hope he is not nigh. He is a fine, portly-looking, middle-aged gentleman, but I don't want to see him now."

Poor Edgar felt his poverty and his helplessness. He wanted to marry this girl at once, and put her to school somewhere out of the way of Jim Newmen, Mr. Pike, or any one else who should dare to look on Miss Pleasance's marvellous beauty. This boy intended nothing but honour to the creature he

loved ; but he became suddenly enlightened by his own sensations as to the risk she ran in a situation so exposed to temptation. She told him, in their repeated meetings, all the village scandals ; and Edgar found that modesty was not worshipped as he had fancied it might be in a remote Cornish village. He found, however, that inconstancy and deception were considered disgraceful—a girl was a bad girl who “kept company” with more than one man, though the period when they twain should become one flesh legally might be put off, like the conversion of Festus, till a convenient season.

Pleasance called Edgar her “sweetheart,” and seemed very happy in her love for the handsome young sailor. He loved her as a man loves but once in his life, but his attachment made him sad. He felt the incongruity of the affection to this girl, who was innocent by youth and circumstance, but had not been educated to good principles. She was very acute in her perceptions, and soon found the necessity of “assuming a virtue, if she had it not.” In truth, virtue was no painful endeavour as learnt from Edgar’s lips.

She was obliged to work all day in the mine, but she met her lover in the evenings, when her grannie's failing sight sent her to bed early in the twilight. She could not expect a lively girl of fifteen to shut herself up in the summer evenings, and knew not when Pleasance returned to the cottage. The old woman's breakfast was already placed in readiness before the girl left the hut in the morning; and as the grandmother toddled down to the mine daily, and saw her child silently and steadily engaged in her occupation of washing the ore, she found nothing to condemn in her conduct.

What course did Edgar mean to pursue? He knew not. He was a ship without rudder or compass. Had there not been such evidences of contrivances to avert poverty at home, he might have thought of an appeal to his parents—an appeal from a boy of eighteen for permission to marry a girl of fifteen, whose existence was spent in washing earth from ore! Luckily he was saved this absurdity, not by reason, for boys of eighteen never see that any can exist contrary to their wishes, but from a conviction that his mother would

meet his request with ridicule ;—that dreadfully sensible mother had no sympathy for any one's sufferings—even for her own. His father loved him, and would, he believed, listen to his story with kindness, but he suspected, with truth, that his kinder parent had nothing to do with the expenditure. In the meantime he gave himself up to the passion, which hurried him onwards like a whirlwind. When tenderness for the health of Pleasance made him drive her up to that nest in the cleft of the rocks, lest she should lose too much of her night's rest by lingering at his side during the hours of darkness, he lay down to dream of her till the first rays of the sun, trembling over the expanse of water, awoke his senses to watch for her small footsteps descending the cliff.

CHAPTER III.

"O, Jealousy—

Love's eclipse—thou art in thy disease

A wild, mad patient, wondrous hard to please."

SUCKLING.

ONE evening she was later than usual in coming to him. The sun had set, and left a hue of lurid light in the horizon, and the clouds, of a deep grey hue, were reflected in the sullen waters. The glory in the sky, reflected on the waters, streamed in a red saffron light to the shore, gleaming brighter or darker as the waters rose and fell as they rippled to the beach. Edgar was uneasy at not seeing her; and when at last a dim light spot was discovered descending the cliff, he had worked himself into a state of nervous ill temper very distressing to himself and to his visitor.

"What kept you?" he cried.

"One or two things kept me; grannie was restless, and did not like me to leave her."

"I suppose you were too busily and too pleasantly engaged to care for me," the youth muttered.

The girl for answer leaned her pretty head on his shoulder.

"Why don't you answer?" he cried, giving her head a little jerk.

"What would you have me say?" she said in a plaintive voice.

"I would have you tell me truth, if you can," he added, scoffingly. "You were not longer with your grandmother than usual—not so long by a minute and a half."

"How canst thou tell?" she said, with a scared look.

"Because I watched you. I saw you walking slowly from the mine, and looking back to see if you were followed—as you wished to be, no doubt."

Pleasance was silent for a moment.

"Where didst thee bide?"

"It does not matter where I stood. Ha! I bided my time. I will have no more

to say to you, such a deceitful girl. I will go away in my boat and never come back again."

Pleasance gave a low cry, as if she had been stricken, and slipped down to his knees, embracing them passionately, with sobs and flowing tears.

Edgar extricated himself from her grasp, and walked away angrily into the shadows of the cliffs.

"To think that I ever meant to have married this girl!" he said, indignantly; "she is false, and if she be innocent, it is because she has as yet had no opportunity of being corporeally vicious."

He went on quickly till he was out of breath, and then sat down on the point of a projecting rock. He wondered if Pleasance would follow him, and was too indignant to care whether she did so or not. Then he asked himself the grounds of his anger. He loved Pleasance so madly, that he spent part of every day in wandering round the mines, under the pretence of collecting specimens of lead and copper, some of which he purchased for a small sum. He had often had Mr. Pike,

the manager, pointed out to him, and by getting into conversation with the older men, he learned enough of this man's character and of the influence he exerted over every family, and each individual of it, to fill him with terror and loathing, when he thought how much injury he might inflict on Pleasance, whom he chose to single out as his favourite of the hour.

Edgar saw him stand and whisper to her as she sat in the shaded corner working the ore. She remained a few minutes after the other women had left the place, and then walked slowly away, looking back after every few steps. It was this which drove Edgar to frenzy. Presently Mr. Pike was seen following the girl, who loitered to allow him to come up with her. Edgar could not hear what was said, but he saw that Pleasance blushed and smiled as suddenly Pike's arm was thrown round her throat and his hand touched her neckhandkerchief, and was withdrawn immediately. Pleasance went on, pressing her hand over her bosom, whilst Pike turned back with a coarse laugh on his face. All this sent Edgar's blood into a ferment.

How helpless he felt in his youth and his poverty; how he hated that stalwart, well-to-do-looking man, with his broad, heavy shoulders and shining black hair and ruddy face.

There is probably no period in a man's life when he loves, and feels with such intensity the passion of jealousy, as at eighteen. No wonder that when Pleasance joined him he was half insane with fury at what he believed to be her falsehood, as he sat on the rock and looked on to the sullen, moaning sea. He told himself that he should like to kill this girl who had laughed at his passion, who had admitted a caress from another, and such another! The vulgar manager of a mine, not a gentleman, like himself. Then he covered his face with his hands, and asked himself, "What am I? what can I do for her? That man Pike gives her the means of existence for herself, and of comparative comfort for her grandmother. What weakness to have put me into the navy! I can never afford to marry. They would laugh at me if I talked of marriage."

He remembered then how anxious he had

been to go into the navy, even into the merchant service; what anxieties had been felt at the Vicarage lest a nomination should not be obtained before he had passed the allotted age. Then he remembered how he had stumbled through his arithmetic, how incomprehensible had seemed the rule of three, till his mother set herself to explain it to him, having first done that good office to herself; how anxious he had been when the examination came on not to be "*goated*;" his exuberant joy when he was complimented on the excellence of his papers; how narrowly he escaped making a deplorable mistake when one of his *viva voce* examiners desired him to spell "symbol," but pronounced it so broadly, that he was in doubt whether he meant cymbal, and how, not being troubled by false shame, he said, "Cymbal an instrument, or symbol a sign?" and without waiting for an answer, he gave the spelling of each word correctly. All these recollections surging one after another into his mind, even as the waves surged up to his feet, he felt that he could not accuse his parents of having acted contrary to his

wishes in placing him in the navy. "But they must have known what I did not think of, that I should wish to marry some day, and that I should be as much cut off from it as if I had been a monk."

CHAPTER IV.

"We met in secret—doubly sweet
Some say they feel it thus to meet :
I know not this—I would have given
The world but to have called her mine
In the fair face of earth and heaven."

HE was leaning on his hands, which rested on his knees. The storm of jealousy in his mind was more racking than any that could stir the waves at his feet. And yet the sky was dark and portentous, showing but one line of amber light in the horizon, flanked by dark sea and gloomy heavens, the waves swelling and whitening as they swept onward to his feet. He would go away at dawn—go back to his ship—and never see that faithless girl again.

She, in the meantime, was feeling her way

over the broken rocks which edged the base of the cliff towards her lover.

"He cannot know—he is only out of temper," she told herself. "He will—he *must*—make it up with me. He cannot guess that he gave me half-a-crown, and promised me a new frock and a locket."

She stepped so quietly that he did not hear her approach; and in a revulsion of feeling he was storming against her inwardly because she had not followed him to offer any explanation.

She stooped over him, placing her hand on his shoulder on the opposite side from which she was standing, so as to half encircle his neck. He felt the touch, and was then, being certain that she was there, inclined to be very angry at her daring to approach him.

"What do you want?" he said, starting up and moving away from her.

"Oh, please sir! do not be so angry and unkind. I came as soon as I could; grandmother kept me, she did indeed!"

Edgar was growing very hard. His mother had brought him up in a horror of falsehood; when he entered the navy his love of truth

was obligatory as part of his profession as an officer and a gentleman.

He stood upright, and began to cross-question her in a stern metallic voice, such as he had heard spoken by his superior officer when interrogating a culprit. There was a determination to be just in the tone of Edgar, as in the mind of his captain on that occasion ; but the captain had not been passionate, as was the unhappy boy who was combating with his first great temptation in life.

Pleasance could not see his face, and did not understand his mood. Indeed, she drew hope from his seeming tranquillity.

"You left your work at your usual time, did I understand you to say?"

"Yes, sir."

"When you had finished, did you loiter to talk to any one, or go home at once?"

"I went home at once." Her voice trembled a little as she reiterated, "I went home at once."

"Without looking behind?"

"I don't think I looked behind."

"Did anyone overtake you?"

Pleasance was beginning to stumble in her thoughts. She was silent, thinking.

"Surely no one could have told him. Oh! I do wish he wouldn't!"

Pleasance thought that Edgar had been out all day in his boat. He was fond of sketching, and used to make drawings of the coast. She considered that no one could have told him, and that she might lie with impunity.

"No one spoke to me," she said.

"No one dropped anything into your bosom? Sweet, innocent, truth-telling girl! Go!—I never desire to see you or to hear the sound of your voice again! I *hate* you!" And Edgar ground his teeth, and stamped his foot on the firm strand, and turned away.

He knew all, then. Pleasance recognized this—felt her head turn giddy—the rocks seemed running round her. She thought she perceived Edgar moving in the darkness—a terrible fear that she was dying overwhelmed her—she gave a cry of anguish, and fell forward insensible, striking her brow against a sharp point of rock. He had walked quickly away, when he was pursued by that cry of

agony, which sounded wierd-like through the eery twilight. He returned, after a moment's hesitation, to ask what had occasioned that wailing exclamation, but it was so dim that he did not see her extended partly on the ground and partly on the rocks.

He called Pleasance, at first loudly, and then with his voice going off into a quaver of fear. He walked, step by step, carefully, for fear of stumbling, towards the spot from which the sound had proceeded, and saw the girl lying on her face, the waves rippling over her feet—motionless, and seemingly dead !

She was false, worthless, but she must not lie there. What had hurt her ? Edgar could not believe that she had fallen from the pain and the shame of detection. Pleasance had never fainted before, and the dread that the insensibility she felt creeping over her was the approach of death, had increased the terror of the moment and intensified the constriction of her heart.

He placed his hands under her arms and lifted her, dragging her into a cavern, further out of the reach of the water. Then he sat down and supported her on his breast, and,

bending over, he placed his cheek on her golden hair, and felt something warm flowing against his face. It was a moment of perplexity and horror. He had no light, and must go to some little distance, to where his boat was moored, to obtain one if necessary.

"Pleasance!" he cried—first sternly, for he could not forget her untruths; and then tenderly, for his love pleaded for her even in his anger. "Pleasance! *do* speak to me; tell me where you are hurt!"

The flowing blood had made her still more faint, though reason was striving to reassert itself. She tried to get up, and, aided by her companion, she managed to stand for an instant.

"I'll go home," she said, and she turned toward the path at the base of the cliff which led to the cottage. Then she stopped, wailing—

"Oh! the water is up—I cannot go!"

"You will not be harmed; I will go and get my cloak from the boat. You may lie on the sand here, where the waves do not reach, till the tide has turned, and then you can go

home. How came you to fall and hurt yourself?"

"You were so dreadful to me, Mr. Petrel."

"Nonsense! how could *I* be dreadful?"

"You frightened me so much," said the girl, beginning to cry, "that I told you all manner of stories, because I was afraid of telling the truth; and there was not much harm, after all, if you knew everything about everything."

"Tell me, then," said Edgar; "but first let me go to the boat for the wraps. You will not faint again whilst I am away?"

"No; not if I can help it; but I did not go to fall down and hurt my head then; and—O, dear! how it aches!"—for she had touched it unconsciously as she spoke.

Edgar went for the cloak and his great coat, and spread the latter on the sands. It was becoming quite dark now. Then he sat by her side, saying, "You may lean against me if you are faint;" and she answered, "No; thank you, sir," and was silent, for she was ashamed of telling him what she felt would irritate him so greatly.

He was not in a mood to wait.

"Will you explain your conduct, Pleasance?" he asked, trying to curb his impatience.

"Oh, dear, I do not know how to make you understand, Mr. Edgar; you do not know how hard it is to be poor!"

"Yes, I do," said Edgar, thinking how he had wanted a new jacket and boots when he was a boy, and how hard he had thought it when his mother refused to let him have them till she could pay ready money for the goods.

"I do not think you really know," the girl said; "we have so little to eat, and grandmother has no teeth to eat the bread, 'tis so very dry, and you see if anybody gives me a shilling or half-a-crown, it makes us feel quite rich for a week, and grandmother can buy a bit of mutton for broth—half a pound—and the neighbours give us an onion, and a few turnips and carrots sometimes, so that's quite a feast; but mostly we have but dry bread. It seems to me," said the girl thoughtfully, "that there is nothing good in the world but money."

"Oh, Pleasance, do not say that," said her lover, who had listened to these revelations in pained silence. "There is a right and a

wrong in the world. The right is to be truthful and to do good. The wrong is to be deceitful and cruel."

The young man's moral philosophy was somewhat muddled, but he was satisfied with his own notion of virtue and vice, and acted up to it when not tempted beyond his strength.

"Tell me," he said, "what that horrible man was saying to you, and why you looked back to see if he were coming. I watched you from the clump of laurels in the garden near the counting-house. I was about the mine all day, and I heard a great deal about that scoundrel, Mr. Pike."

"You should not speak like that, Mr. Edgar. He is a kind man when he likes a body. He told me to stay after the girls had left work, and that he would give me half-a-crown because I was so steady at washing the ore. He had not got change then, he said, but he was going to get some. He did not come back, and I looked all about for him, for I was thinking how pleased grandmother would be if I took her half-a-crown in the middle of the week, and she not expecting it; so when

I was quite out of heart and of hope, I saw him acoming after me, and he came up and dropt the half-a-crown here," she said, putting her hand to her bosom, "and—and—that was all."

"Was that all? I know it was all then; but did Mr. Pike ever kiss you, Pleasance?"

"No, sir; never."

"How can I believe you, when you have told me so many stories?"

"I don't know," said the girl, beginning to cry.

"Look up at that star, Pleasance! Do you know that God is in heaven?"

"Yes, sir; I've heard tell so."

"Where do you expect to go when you die?"

"Oh! dear! I don't know—sinners go to hell-fire, Mr. Wakener says in chapel."

"And good people go to heaven?"

"Yes; but," said Pleasance with a shudder, "it seems so cold and dark, and so far off; I had rather stay here;" and she shrunk closer to Edgar's side.

"Pleasance, swear to tell me the truth, as you hope to be happy for ever."

Heaven had not seemed attractive in the abstract to Pleasance, so Edgar thought of bribing her by some general and confused notion of happiness. It might consist in abundance of the mutton broth she had described with so much enthusiasm, or it might take the form of a new frock or freshly-trimmed bonnet ; but it was to act as a spell on her.

"I promise," she said.

"Did any one ever kiss you ?"

"Scores of times," replied the girl simply.

"Who ?" cried Edgar in a voice of thunder.

"Why, granny and brother Bill, afore he ran away and went for a cabin boy aboard the 'Billy Roughun.'"

Edgar winced at the idea of the cabin-boy brother on board the "Bellerophon," and the intelligence broadened to his mind the distance between his rank and that of Pleasance more than if the boy had been a little drummer in a regiment ; but he was too eager in his cross-examination to allow the intelligence to rest long in his mind.

"Did Mr. Pike ever kiss you ?"

"Never !" she replied emphatically.

"What would you do if he offered to put his hands near you?"

"He would not go to do me no harm," said the girl. "He is handy with his fist amongst the boys, but he never do strike a gel."

"She is quite innocent," thought the youth. "Does your head hurt you now?" he said more softly.

"Not much, only I cannot bear to touch it." There was a silence. "I hope granny will not awake and miss me," she said. "It must be getting very late; do you think the tide will turn soon, sir?"

Edgar was in no haste that the tide should turn.

"It cannot reach us," he said; "we are safe here; no one can come to us, if we cannot go away." And he lifted the chin of the girl, and looked lingeringly into her face.

"Pleasance, do you love me?" he said.

"You know I love you, sir."

"Will you swear never to let any one kiss you but me as long as you live?"

"I swear," said the girl fervently.

"Then I swear by those stars in heaven

that I will marry you as soon as I can get a clergyman to perform the service."

Pleasance said nothing except by putting her hand in his.

The storm, which had threatened for some hours, now burst in all its violence; the wind roared, and the angry waves dashed themselves into foam on the rocks which stood sentinel-like on each side of their sheltering cavern. The billows ran up the sloping floor and nearly reached their feet. Pleasance was accustomed—as was her sailor boy—to the sea and all its moods, but she clung closer to Edgar as the hissing wave came near enough to cover her feet with foam.

"Do you think it will come any higher? It is much higher than usual."

"No, my life! I believe the tide has turned; but, Pleasance, I could consent to die now, sooner than to be separated from you. These moments seem to hold life's *all*."

"Yes; but I had rather that we might live to love a long time—to be your wife, and go to church in a pretty bonnet and a nice white frock."

"No church can equal these grand old

rocks, which have been here ages before a church was built," said Edgar.

"There it comes again," she whispered, shuddering, as the wave soared onwards, and, breaking at the entrance, sent up its inquisitive waters to the end of the cave where the boy and girl were reclining; but that was the last of those terrible billows—each time now the space was greater between their feet and the water.

The wind roared still, but Edgar shielded Pleasance from its violence. By degrees sleep stole over her senses. The last sound in her ears was the murmurs of his tender love-talk: "Sleep, my darling, in peace; I will watch over you. As safe with your Edgar as in your own small nest in the rocks." And with the chivalric devotion of a knight who watches his armour in the sacred precincts of the castle chapel, Edgar wore out the remainder of the summer night in musing over his promise to claim the mine girl for his wife, and perplexedly cogitating how his vow to her was to be accomplished. With all his anxiety there was this consolation—he should save her from the persecutions of Mr. Pike. At length his head drooped over hers, and he slept too.

CHAPTER V.

“ Beyond the parting and the meeting,
I shall be soon ;
Beyond the farewell and the greeting,
Beyond the pulse’s fever beating.”

THE bright sun broke through its shrouding of pink and amber and gray clouds, and darting his rays on the eyes of the sleepers caused Edgar to sit up and recall the events of the past night. He looked at the girl by his side. One arm was flung over her eyes ; but the purely-coloured cheek was glowing under the tangles of her rich brown hair, and the scarcely opened lips revealed the delicate little teeth within them.

Edgar regarded her sadly, and with a sense of a new responsibility. “ She is to be my wife now, by virtue of my promise,” he said.

"Sweet, innocent child ! How dear she is to me !"

The boat was rocking in the distance. He must leave Pleasance that day, and seek some means of carrying out his promise. Very grave he had become, this young lover and self-affianced husband of eighteen. His brain whirled at the thought that he had no means of obviating the necessity of her working on the mine. He had but little money. Should he write and tell his father all that he had done, and entreat their merciful consideration of his conduct ? Alas ! had they been rich, the announcement would have been terrible, but pinched for means of living, what a crime would the claim and the cause of the claim be considered in their eyes, should he keep his word and marry the girl. Were he in a new country, where men marry young and population is required, it would be a righteous rather than a sinful act to marry so young. Ergo, it is not a sin in the eyes of heaven. He had money enough to procure the services of a clergyman, and he must arrange about it that very day. The "Isis" would sail soon. "Will she be constant to me ? I believe she

will," he thought, as he looked down on the beautiful girl over whom the newly-arisen sun was streaming in misty rays, illuminating with threads of gold the edges of her tangled hair. Her small hands were worn and embrowned by labour, but they were delicate in shape.

"Oh! I do love her so!" cried the youth, as he knelt by her side and awakened her by kisses. "My Pleasance! my Eve! my own darling! I must go—I must leave you this morning!"

Pleasance sat up and placed her arms round his neck.

"Do not go—I am sure it cannot be time yet—do not leave me! Why does morning come so soon? I like night best, when you are here!" And she hid her face on his breast.

"I go, that I may return the sooner. I will arrange for our marriage, my own."

"Will you, really?" said Pleasance, brightening. "Shall I have a new frock?"

"Yes, dear child!"

"Oh!" she sighed—a long sigh of pleasure—"kiss me once more."

"And now, good-bye! If I wait I shall not be able to tear myself away at all."

She went to the edge of the water with him, and then clambered over the rough rocks projecting into the sea, as far as she could, to be nearer to him. At length the boat was but a spot in the horizon, and only seen occasionally amongst the tossing billows. Then, flushed and conscious, she ascended the cliff.

"I hope grannie will not have waited for her breakfast, and found out that I have not been at home," she murmured.

CHAPTER VI.

"Methought the ocean said, amidst its roar
At midnight—Thou shalt see thy love no more."

SHE found the old woman still asleep. Movement was irksome to her, and she lay awake for hours during the darkness, to fall asleep at dawn. She sometimes spoke to Pleasance, when very dreary in those night-watches, but she did not often succeed in awaking her grandchild. Her breathing was embarrassed, and she did not get out of her bed to see if Pleasance were in the small room next to her. Of course, the child was there—where else should she be?

Repentant at having left her so long, the girl lighted a few sticks, and boiled some water in which to dip a crust, over which some coarse sugar was sprinkled. This was her grandmother's breakfast.

"Thou dost look bright this morning, lass ! but thy shoes are drabbly with sand, and thy coats too. Mr. Pike will call thee slut not to clean thyself."

"I came home by the sands, grannie," said the girl turning pale.

"Be a good maid, and make thy reverence if the master speaks to thee, child. We'll have a drop of broth for thy supper to-night."

Pleasance went to her work. She tossed her head as she tied on her hat : she was full of thoughts of Edgar, and of the importance of her future position. She was to be the wife of a gentleman, and such a handsome young man !

Patience Penruddocke had been a mine girl, and she had married quite a respectable gentleman, an alderman at Padstow, but she was twenty and he was fifty-five. She had a sight of money to be sure ; and such beautiful silks.

Pleasance wondered if Edgar had plenty of money ; she did not know. He wore a beautiful crown in the front of his cap, so he must be rich, for that meant that he belonged to the Queen's service, and the Queen's servants

must be well paid, of course—so ignorant was Pleasance.

She was silent amongst her companions that day : full of thoughts of her altered circumstances. When they taunted her with her silence, she might have replied in the words of Florian—

“ Un jour vous saurez pourquoi.”

They suggested that she had seen old dame Pengelly, who “walked” at night in the shape of a white faced horse. She had been frequently met, and could be recognized at a distance by the clinking of a chain.

Pleasance was so silent at this accusation that it gained ground like most unreplied to charges.

Mr. Pike came up to where the girls were at work, and was disappointed and angry that Pleasance did not look from her work when he stood behind her. He deserved a glance for his half crown, he considered. She, on her side, knew of his proximity and shuddered. Her love for Edgar made her understand the advances of this middle-aged man, and their

motive. He was not disposed to remain unnoticed.

"How came you by that cut on the side of your forehead, Pleasance?" he asked.

"I fell down, sir—tripped over a stone, and knocked my head."

"Umph! tripped did you? You will spoil your beauty, girl, if you do that often."

"I hope not, sir; I mean I hope I shall not hurt myself," she cried, blushing, for it seemed as if she had been admitting the possession of beauty.

Mr. Pike waited till the girls went to open their bags and take out their dinners, consisting for the most part of potatoes baked in some paste, called a potato pasty. This they all ate under the shelter of a hedge on their raised knees. As the others moved off, he placed his heavy hand on the shoulder of Pleasance, and bending down, whispered—

"Stay after the rest go home, and come to the counting-house to speak to me."

The girl made no reply, nor did Mr. Pike expect any. He was quite certain that no one in the mine would dare to omit the performance of anything he desired to have done.

Pleasance was so white when she reached her companions that they asked what the master had said. She did not mind telling them—there was nothing sacred in that confidence.

One of the elder girls laughed scornfully.

"Any one can tell what that means," she cried. "If you go you will be a ruined girl, and if you don't go you will be sent off the mine."

Pleasance began to cry.

"Well, gel! I only told you the truth. He's liberal enough to them as will go his ways; but he is the very devil for spite if he is thwarted."

That evening Pleasance went down to the beach, and lingered till it was dark, in the faint hope that Edgar might return to the cavern. How hollow the murmurs of the waves sounded as they roared up towards the deserted shelter!—how lonely the cavern seemed! There was the pressure they had left on the disturbed sand, and a slight stain of blood on the shore close to the rock over which she had fallen.

"Oh! Edgar!" she cried involuntarily,

"come back!" and the echo answered—"back."

It seemed eery, and she went up the cliff with trembling feet to where her grannie awaited her.

"Oh! grannie," she said, sitting down and tossing her hat from her.

"Pick up thy hat and hang it on the peg, wasteful gel."

Pleasance did it not, and the old woman did it herself.

"Thou art a lazy slut, and don't mind what thy grannie says," she whined.

"Oh! grannie!" again cried the girl, looking at her piteously; "master told me to go and see him this evening, when I left work, in the counting-house, when everybody else was gone!"

The grandmother was silent: she knew what the order meant. Then, at length, in a very low voice, she said—

"Didst thou go?"

"No. I went and stood by the sea a bit, and then came here."

The old woman sighed deeply.

"Pleasance," she said, "what shall we do if he turns thee off the mine?"

"I can't tell, I'm sure," replied the girl.

"We shall starve."

"I cannot help that," replied the granddaughter. "It is bad to feel the want of food—the sickness—the gnawing of the inside—'tis deadly," observed the granddame.

The old woman would not that her young charge should sell herself; but had Pleasance done so she would have held her peace, and taken the wages of iniquity. She must not be too severely judged. Mr. Pike was the presiding power of their small world. In the moral atmosphere in which they lived, with want scaring from the path of virtue, and comfort and abundance beckoning to the ways of vice, they had not much choice. Moreover, people judge themselves by the opinions of their neighbours.

Mine girls before now had been favourites with the manager, who was liberal to those, and to the relatives of those, who ministered to his pleasures. Sometimes they had borne children, and their parents had half-a-crown a-week for the care of the infant. Such a connection was not considered detrimental to the prospects of the frail girl. Such deposed sultanas were quickly married by steady men,

who did not object to the young woman on account of her previous indiscretion, or discretion, as it was usually considered, especially as Mr. Pike generally gave a handsome present to the newly married couple.

Pleasance, however, had an ægis of which her grandmother knew nothing—her love for the man whom she simply considered to be her husband. She had never mentioned to her relative her meetings with Edgar. She could not talk about him to any one; the subject was sacred. She knew, if her grandmother was aware of the circumstance, she would urge the girl to ask her lover for money; and this Pleasance had too much natural delicacy to do.

They drank the remains of the mutton broth for supper, and grannie groaned, thinking of Mr. Pike's half-crown which had purchased it, and of the small chance there was of another such gift.

"We shall have no more," she said, as she tilted the basin.

"Never mind, grannie, I shall marry a gentleman, some day, and you shall have a hot dinner every day."

"There are no gentlemen hereabout, child,

except Mr. Pike, and he cannot marry thee, because they say he has got a wife and children aplenty, somewhere up in Exeter."

"No; it will not be such an old man as that," cried Pleasance, with great contempt.

"Bless thee, maid! a husband must fall from the skies, or be dug up out of the mines, for thee."

"Or come over the seas, grannie," replied Pleasance, her spirits rising at the thought of her lover's return. "Don't fret," she said, kissing the old woman's withered cheek, "it will all come right—you shall see! Now let us go to bed and dream of money to buy a cow, as the saying is."

The grandmother had not that spring of youthful hope, nor had she the groundwork of her granddaughter's knowledge of the young sailor to build on. But she was old and weary, and disposed to let the future take care of itself.

When Pleasance worked at the mine on the following day, Mr. Pike took no notice in any way of her neglect of his order of the previous evening. When she left off she went to her grandmother at once.

The tide would not serve for her lover's boat till near midnight. She must wait till the old woman slept. She thought he would surely come that night. He had not mentioned any time especially, only that he would return as soon as possible.

Alas! how few can tell, when they part, that they shall ever meet again!

CHAPTER VII.

Oh, Love! what is it in this world of ours
That makes it fatal to be loved? Ah! why
With cypress branches hast thou wreathed thy bowers,
And made thy best interpreter a sigh?

WHEN her grandmother slept, Pleasance stole down the side of the dark cliff to watch for Edgar's boat. The tide was coming up, but had not yet reached the cave, for the impatience of Pleasance had made her restless. The water was deep enough for his boat; surely he *must* come soon! Yet, whilst she thus reassured herself, she felt a conviction that he was not on his way to her.

It was now too dark to discover any small object on the water at a distance. She would go down to the beach; perhaps—Oh, joy!—she should hear the grating of the keel on the

pebbles as she got down to the edge of the water.

She waited, shivering. Then she took up bits of broken shells and flat stones and fragments of slate.

"If I can skim the top of the wave three times with one stone, he will come," she thought; and she began, with an anxiety that made her arm unsteady, to fling them, playing ducks-and-drakes, as it is called.

Those small evidences of superstition are at work in most of our brains, if we would but own them; and Rousseau, who put the test of his eternal salvation on his striking the bark of a particular apple-tree, and the old lady of Markshall, in Essex, who flung a glass goblet on the pavement, declaring she should be damned in the next world as certainly as the crystal would be shattered, were undoubtedly comforted by the result of their experiments;—Rousseau struck the silvery bark, and the glass remained unbroken on the marble pavement.

Pleasance, however, could not succeed in her effort. The waves broke before the slate could do more than skim its surface twice. She

watched till the sun arose, and showed the wide extent of waters, unburthened by anything heavier than its own foam; then went back and crept silently and weeping to bed, to awake to the repetition of the day's labours and the night's watching in vain. Her grandmother was comforted by the circumstance of Mr. Pike's silence.

"He sees my gel is not one of that sort," she muttered to herself; "he will let her be."

In her heart she was proud of her grandchild's inconvenient chastity, when the burthen of it was not going to press on herself.

On Saturday afternoon, as the girls all assembled at the door of the counting-house to receive their wages earned in the week, Mr. Pike sat magisterially in an easy chair. His clerk, Mr. Daniel, paid the different sums to the girls. Pleasance Fern's name was last called, and she came in with a scared look, which she tried to disguise under a curtsy and a piteous smile.

"There is your money," said the clerk. "You will not be required to work any longer on this mine."

Pleasance knew that this decision entailed starvation on herself and her grandmother. Involuntarily she looked pleadingly at Mr. Pike, whose eyes were seeming as fixed as his attention was engrossed by his newspaper. Then she addressed herself to Mr. Daniel—

“Oh! please sir, what have I done? Why am I sent away?”

“I cannot enter into that, young woman,” said Mr. Daniel, hemming to make his voice hard. “There are your wages,” as he pushed the money towards her.

He rose so as to screen himself from his employer, and taking a shilling of his own from his waistcoat pocket, with a look enforcing secrecy, he added it to the small sum which was Pleasance’s due. He was a foolish young man, thinking more of the fit of his coat and the sitting of his shirt collar than anything else, but he suspected from Pike’s known character what was the nature of the offence Pleasance had committed; and gave her his pity, and a shilling he could ill spare, as the fruit thereof.

Very sadly did the girl return that evening to the hut on the cliff. Her grandmother sat

in the doorway; a mob cap with a blue-striped kerchief over her head, and her black eyes looking out of a network of wrinkles. Her contrast to the beauty of Pleasance—which was of the type termed angelic, from its fairness and delicacy—was striking. The girl was very sad, and sat down by her grandmother's side, uttering the words which meant desolation to both.

“Grannie, I’m turned off!”

“Oh! that wicked, wicked man!” cried the old woman. “How shall we get bread to eat?”

“There is the wage, and a shilling over that kind gentleman gave me—Mr. Daniel, the clerk. If we can get along for another week, something may happen afore the end of it.”

“What can happen, child, except starvation?” said the old woman, testily.

“Perhaps I might get work at Wheal Hewas,” said the girl.

“And if you did that is ten miles off. How could you walk twenty miles every day? You would wear the shoes off your feet. And how could I leave this place that your father built for me, what I have never paid rent for? Oh,

dear! I must go down on my bended knees to that cruel old reprobate to beg him to let you go on working."

"No, grannie, 'tis no use; I should not like it."

"What's the odds whether you like it or lump it, when we shall have to go without victuals, or be turned out of my home, that my own son built for me."

"Let us go to bed now, grannie," said poor Pleasance.

Her hopes now turned to six o'clock on the following morning, when the tide would be high water. She had ceased to think of the promised white frock and new hat which Edgar was to bring her; her mind was racked by cruel, torturing doubts, as to whether Edgar would ever come back. Perhaps the boat had capsized, and he had been drowned on the day when he left her, and she would never see him again.

At this dismal possibility, she sank down on the sands and sobbed like a child, till her tears were exhausted. Sometimes she thought he had forgotten her, had evaded his promise of making her his wife; then a conviction of

his unalterable truth deluged her mind, and she felt that she could not doubt him. Something dire had occurred. He was hurt, dead perhaps, and then she twisted her hands in her rich brown hair, and dragged it as if bodily pain could divert her thoughts from her mental anguish.

On the following morning she felt a desperate sense of relief in being able to watch the sea without the necessity of going to the mine. She had been anticipating that high water would be at the time when she was at work, and that Edgar would be on the beach for hours before she could be aware of it.

There was money enough for a week in her grandmother's hands for their support. Then should she go and offer herself at Wheal Hewas? She hated the thought of being ten miles from the sea. What would her grandmother do without her? Supposing Pleasance sent her half her money, that would hardly suffice for the support of either, when divided ; it was barely sufficient when shared.

"Oh, Edgar! Edgar! if you would but come back!" She thought all her troubles

would be over if she could but once put her arms round his neck, and feel that she belonged to somebody able to aid her more effectually than her poor old grandmother.

The end of the week approached, and no Edgar.

"I *must* go and beg Mr. Pike to take you on again," said the old woman.

Pleasance hoped "it was but talk," but when she saw Mrs. Fern tidying herself, and trying to bend an obstinate curve out of the front of her old black bonnet, she placed her hand on her grandmother's withered arm, and said,

"Thee must *not* go; thee must wait, grannie. Nothing shall make me work under Mr. Pike again. I belong to somebody else."

And Pleasance told her grandmother of her love for Edgar, and his promise. The old woman rocked herself backwards and forwards on her chair, and meaned.

"Thee good-for-nothing girl!" she cried. "*He* will never come back to thee. He knows too well for that. Thou art a fool!"

cried the old woman, striking Pleasance on the side of the head with her stick.

Pleasance put her hand up and wept.

"Dost like to starve ? Thou hast never tried it. Try ! then thou wilt know what it is to feel the cold water rise in thy mouth at the smell of other people's victuals, and have nothing to take away the gnawing emptiness inside thee. What wilt thou do when I am a-dying on the bed there, and thee too weak to crawl to the town to beg a bit of bread ? I will die rather than go to the union. Thee may go and leave me if thee like, I that brought thee up, a wailing, peeking babe, when I loved thy little chitty face, and now I am past work, and thee don't care what comes of me."

"God," sobbed the girl, "will not desert me nor thee, if I do what is honest to the man who will be my husband."

"Dost thee think God concerns himself for such as thou art ?" said the old woman. "God cares for the strong and the helpful. Art thou more innocent than a hare, that kills nothing, and lives but on the short sweet grass between the furze bushes on the heath ?

I was coming home last evening ; I heard something cry like a child, but sharper, more piercing ; I moved the bushes to see, and a hare was having her kits, and a stoat was eating away her face. Half of it was gone—one of her eyes, half her mouth—yet she was shrieking. I drove the stoat away, and the hare died in her pains. Did God make the stoat to kill the innocent hare ? Did he care for the kits, left to starve ? and will He care for thee ? See how the dogs worry the lambs, and the sheep cannot help them. The strong worry the weak, and kill them.”

Then she urged Pleasance to go to Mr. Pike at once. It would be best for both of them ; then they would not want food, and Pleasance might be well dressed, and have a new bonnet and a frock and a sash, and look like a lady. If Pleasance had not a heart of stone, she would provide for her grandmother, and not leave her to starve.

Though the resolution of Pleasance was nearly prostrated by her grandmother and her worst fears about Edgar, yet she had a hope that he might return. The bliss of seeing him again would repay her for all the con-

tumely she was now undergoing ; then her grandmother would see that she had been right in trusting to the youth who had taught her, in their brief intercourse, to rely on his honour and integrity.

The girl's blood curdled at the suggestion of this sacrifice of herself, urged for her by her grandmother. Never, she said to herself, should she be so degraded ; and she resolved, if reproached much more by her grandmother, to fling herself from the highest part of the cliff, sooner than obey her suggestion.

" I wonder how she would live then," the girl said, maliciously. " I should be glad she should suffer."

The young have no gratitude for the ordinary care that has been expended on their nurture. If their lives are unhappy, they cannot be expected to be particularly grateful for their preservation from death.

Pleasance loved her grandmother, as young folks love their elders, when she was not thwarted by her. Now she felt that she hated her. Pleasance did not reason on any abstract notions of purity and virtue. She had had none such implanted in her ; she had

only as her guide the instinct of love towards the youth who had promised to make her his wife on the condition that she was true to him. Mrs. Fern regarded that promise as the silly love prattle of a young man, uttered probably for the purpose of some design of his own. She had not much faith in the asseverations of her innocence ; she had no trust in the promises the sailor had made to return and marry her grand-daughter. Starvation or the workhouse impended, and she was not going to submit to such a state of affairs if they could be rectified by her management. So when Pleasance, in a tumult of anger, rushed away to seek the beach, and wander about the rocks like a dog deserted by his master, Mrs. Fern put on her best clothes, and went down to the mine to try her persuasions on Mr. Pike to take Pleasance back to her work. She knocked at the door of the counting-house, and was startled by the rough-toned "Come in" from the manager.

He was alone, for Mr. Daniel had been sent with some samples of ore to the smelting-house.

"What may your business be, good wo-

man?" said he, taking a cigar from his mouth carelessly.

He did not know any old women—they were young ones whom he employed on the mine.

"Please, sir, I'm Pleasance Fern's grandmother. I'm come to ask your honour if you will be pleased to take her back to work on the mine, for we are put to it to get a bit of bread, if you please sir," and she dropped a curtsy.

"Your grand-daughter is a bad girl: insolent, disobedient; she was a disgrace to the mine, and for that reason I turned her off."

"Oh, please, sir, don't say so; she is not a bad girl; I never saw any forward ways; she is a very timersome child; she is quite a child—not sixteen; very like, such a great gentleman as you she is *scart* by. I am sure, sir, if she only knowed your wishes she would be conformable to them; but she is very innocent, and don't understand manners always."

"Well, send her up to me, and let her say she is sorry, and perhaps I will forgive her, and we may be better friends in future. In the meantime, I don't wish that any one be-

longing to my workfolks should want bread, so there are five shillings for you."

"Bless you, and thank you a thousand times," the old woman cried as she pocketed the coin; "but I cannot send her up to-night—that is, this evening—for she went out, poor girl, to wander about on the sands and pick up any bits that would do for firewood. Would to-morrow do?"

"Yes," replied the man, sullenly; "but if she don't come then, it will be the worse for you both."

CHAPTER VIII.

“ I’ll woo thee like a soldier at arm’s length.”

MR. PIKE was not a man to grudge a little trouble when it was necessary to carry out his wishes. The girl was wandering on the sands. He would go and speak with her there, and bring her to reason. He waited till the old woman was gone, who went away in desperate perplexity as to what means she could employ to make Pleasance obedient, and then, taking his purse in his pocket, he stalked to the beach. The twilight had gathered over the bay, hastened by a mist which hung over the sea. There was a steep path down the side of the cliff, broken and crumbling; but though the footing was perilous to a man so heavy in person as Mr. Pike, a certain amount of

danger would not turn him from his purpose. He had to finish the descent with a run to prevent his falling on his face, and recovered himself from that undignified movement to look about him in search of Pleasance. The broad grandeur of the expanse of rock and ocean, and the sullen monotonous roar of the unceasing waves as they broke upon the sands, might have affected a man of a nature less animal than the manager of Wheal Constance. The over arching cliffs of dark granite might have seemed like the solemn recesses of a temple, and the delicate white object far distant standing motionless on the point of a rock and gazing intently on the horizon, a statue placed to the genius of the place.

Mr. Pike had no thought so fanciful or refined; that figure was the girl of whom he was in search, if, indeed, it were not a seagull. He began to walk towards Pleasance as fast as he could, feeling like a tiger advancing to its victim, and believing that no means existed for the escape of his prey. The tide was coming in, he observed, and he made rough calculations that he must come back before another hour elapsed, or he should

be unable to round the headlands which projected into the water ; they would be difficult, if not impossible, to climb over in the uncertain light.

The meditations of Pleasance were sad ones ; she dreaded her grandmother's reproaches, she dreaded blows from that crutch which the old woman wielded so adroitly, but, worst of all, she felt wretched to think that neither peace nor love would welcome her in that small hut on the cliff. Her spirits sank every night when her daily watch for Edgar's return had been fruitless. In the morning, after sleep, she felt fresh hope and expectation.

Her feelings may be imagined when at a small distance from the rock on which she stood she distinguished in a dark ponderous figure advancing towards her, the form of the man whom she hated and dreaded most in the world. She felt that no human ear could hear her cries for help, and she suspected rather than knew, or rather she was convinced by intuition, that no struggles of reluctant loathing on her part would avail to save her from his clutches. In desperation she left the spot on which her footsteps were

necessarily uncertain, and from which she feared he would lift her in his arm if he came up to the side of the rock. With her heart beating so fast that she gasped and felt suffocated, she determined to show no signs of terror, and to speak "just civil," not to provoke him.

The idea was no sooner formed than she abandoned it. The thought of willingly diminishing the distance between herself and that dreadful creature by any act of volition was impossible. Loneliness surrounded her; should she scream for help, the noise would awaken hundreds of sea fowl, who would echo the cries in terror or anger, and drown her own. Her adversary was so tall that he could reach higher than any of the rocks on which she usually clambered. She had on one or two occasions within the last week meditated self-destruction, but now the thought of plunging into those sand-thickened waters and feeling them suffocating her in mouth and nose, filled her with terrible dread, and still her enemy advanced. He was within a few yards when she ran to the cliff and clambered up the rough surface till she found a

small slanting ledge, on which she stood breathless for a few instants, looking back at her pursuer like an unfortunate cat with a fierce mastiff at her haunches, who climbs up a tree of which the smooth bark gives but little purchase, remains for a few minutes clinging till her strength is exhausted, and she drops into the jaws of her enemy. The heart of Pleasance beat with frightful rapidity. She believed, but was not quite certain, that Mr. Pike could not reach her where she stood, and she knew that the ledges on which she had planted her feet would give no support to his large tread and stiff boots.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Tis nature's law—the strong the weak devour,
The mouse lies trembling in sleek Pussy's power,
The mangling hounds pull down the timid hind,
And man the autocrat enthralls mankind.”

TERRIBLE were the feelings of the solitary girl when her persecutor came as near as he could to the point on which she stood ; but the bottom of the cliff was thickly covered with rugged stones which had fallen from its summit to its base. As soon as Mr. Pike tried to get a footing on these they gave way under his feet, and he, stumbling, fell on them and cut his face. The slight weight of Pleasance had been incapable of stirring any one of the heap. He got up cursing in horrible language, and desired Pleasance to come down directly. She made no reply. She would

not speak lest her trembling voice should reveal her abject terror. She believed that there was no deed of violence of which this bad man was not capable when his blood was up.

"Look here, girl!" he said at length, striving to soften his voice to a persuasive tone, "see this purse; it is heavy; there is gold on one side and silver on the other; come down to me and I will give it all to you."

Pleasance looked at the money. It was as if a starving creature were offered a feast. How happy it would make her and her poor grannie. Then she thought of Edgar and the price which was to be paid for the concession, and she turned her head away.

"Will you come or will you not?" roared Pike from the foot of the cliff.

"No,—I tell you no—never," said the girl recovering her courage as she found herself out of his reach, for she guessed correctly that no money would have been offered to tempt her down if he could have compelled her by force.

"Once more, will you come or not?"

"Never," she repeated.

Then with a frightful oath he cried, "As I am a living man I'll stone you where you stand;" and taking a fragment he hurled it at her. It struck her arm by which she was clinging, and the pain and the terror extorted from her a piteous cry, but she did not let go; half a yard further she might turn a point of the cliff and be sheltered. It was a foot and a half of terrible risk, but seeing Pike stooping to pick up another stone she sprung by aid of the arm which was yet uninjured; and when he arose and stood back—all his hellish passions alert—to fling it at her, she was no longer there. She had dropped perhaps into the sea. He looked about but could not perceive her; a superstitious dread took possession of him. Perhaps he had killed her. He did not know whether he had struck her arm or her head. If she should be found dead? Her body washed in. Well, what then? No one could trace the stone which had been flung to him. He thought uneasily that two children had seen him come down as they were dragging up a little cart of seaweed. "This cursed girl! I wish she were in' hell. I

wish she had never been born, with her chitty face to drive me half mad. I must go home. The tide will have come up too close to the cliff if I do not make haste. I wish she were at the bottom of the Red Sea."

He looked, however, about the waves which were dashing up near the rocks to watch if the childish form of Pleasance were to be seen tossing about amongst the foam of the billows; but then he was seized with a horror of what might meet his eyes, and fled as fast as the uneven ground permitted.

"Brute! unmanly brute!" the girl murmured to herself weeping sad tears over the tingling pain in her arm. "It is not so bad here; I can sit down a bit; but oh, what can I do to-morrow? I will run away, I will. I'll go. I don't know where to go," she cried sobbing, "and Edgar does not come back. He is dead very likely, and nobody can tell me. I'll run away and beg my way to Plymouth, and I shall be able to hear something about the great ship he told me he sailed in. He never would keep away if he were alive, unless they had shut him in somewhere. My arm hurts so; perhaps grannie would put

some herbs to it if I could go home ; he must be gone now. It is so dark. Oh ! if he should be waiting for me there still. I will not try. He might jump out against me and catch hold of me from behind a rock ; better to wait here till morning ; the men will be coming with their sand carts then."

So Pleasance drew up her knees, clasping them with her arms and resting her head on them, after the manner of a corpse prepared for interment in the stone age, and slept occasionally, waking up cold and cramped, till the sunshine dawned over land and sea and sparkled on the points of foam-washed rocks, and brought warmth and comfort to the out-cast. She did not know where to go but to her grandmother ; she felt like a dog who has a hard master, but who returns and returns after violent treatment, because he has no other home. She went down the cliff slowly, with some wonder at the perilous places she had climbed when driven by terror on the previous night.

"There is where he stood. He came very near," she said looking at the print of his feet, "but what is that?" and she gasped—a gasp of delight.

There on the sands and partly obscured by a fragment of rock lay the purse with which he had tempted her on the previous night. "Plenty of money," she said, "heavy—gold—silver. I've got it. I shall be rich. I will never part with it. I am glad he has lost it. A cowardly brute to throw stones at me. What would Edgar say if he knew it? He would kill him—shoot him dead."

It comforted her a little to think of this, and then she wept again to know that Edgar was removed from her by some inscrutable circumstance which made any reference to him impossible. She put the purse inside the bosom of her dress. The money was a power—a stepping-stone she thought to reach Edgar, or to obtaining some intelligence from him.

When she arrived at the hut her grandmother was crooning over a handful of lighted sticks, which she had kindled in the rock-backed chimney. She looked up to Pleasance wistfully; she felt sure she had been promising what the girl would never perform. Pleasance saw the wistful look, but not having the key of the previous conversation

whereby to interpret it, she felt only pity for the yearning expression of want in her grandmother's face.

"There are two cold potatoes I kept for thee, gel," she said, pointing to a shelf on which the food was placed.

The grandmother had eaten one, and longed to devour the others, quite as eagerly as did Pedrillo in the shipwreck, after eating one of the spaniel's forepaws.

"I don't want them, grannie," said the girl sadly. "I went and stood by the mine-maids as they were having their dinner, and they gave me more than I could eat. It seems to me that they like me better now that I am not working with them."

"Very like ; they are not jealous of thee now."

"Grannie, I am going to bed. I shall go out early to-morrow morning ; I cannot tell when I shall come back. There is a sovereign for thee."

"Gold !" cried the crone. "Where did gold come from ?"

Pleasance had forgotten this difficulty, and was silent.

"Thou hast seen the master."

"Yes," the girl replied shortly.

"Where?" asked the curious grandmother.

"On the beach," replied Pleasance.

"Ah! I told him he would find thee there."

Pleasance said nothing, but she loathed the speaker.

This fact explained to Mrs. Fern what the early going out of Pleasance and dubious return might mean. By some arrangement she was going to lodgings provided by Mr. Pike, and to be made a lady of. Mrs. Fern would have another sovereign when that was spent besides the five shillings. She was as much a favoured woman in her own opinion as the mother of Madame Pompadour, who, when dying, heard of her daughter's promotion to be mistress of the king, and exclaimed, "Now I can die happy! my dearest wish is accomplished." She kissed Pleasance and blessed her, and told her she hoped she would be a good girl, which meant that she would supply her well with the results of her sin.

Pleasance was very depressed when she prepared for her journey next morning. She

did not know on what road to set out except from having watched the direction of Edgar's boat when he came and went. She stood on the top of the cliff searching with less of hope from its frequent disappointments along the waste of waters to seek for some speck on the distant horizon which she could fancy to be a boat. She looked till her eyes watered from the glare of the level sun just risen. Then covered her eyes with her small brown hand to rest them. Then looked again and thought she saw a dark spot in the distance. In an instant Hope sprang up from a death-like stillness into full life and vigour—nay, so strong was that goddess that she was about to change her nature into that of her lovelier sister, Certainty. There was a boat certainly coming in towards the beach—their beach. Then she saw, she fancied that there was more than one person in it; yes, certainly two. But Edgar had brought a clergyman with him no doubt. She was glad that she was nicely dressed (for her), for she had put on her Sunday frock for her journey. She must go down now and meet him, or he would be disappointed not to see her at the appointed

place. Thus she must lose sight of the boat in the windings of the path by which she must descend, but he would have arrived by the time she reached the bottom of the cliff to welcome him.

She was however too quick—too hurried to be clasped in the arms of her lover—not to forestall the arrival. She was on the shingle and round the point of the rock—she heard the grating of the boat's keel on the pebbles. She sprang on the low rock, and saw two old sailors whom she had known from her infancy. They scarcely noticed her, being occupied in unlading their boat from the haul of fish which had been more than usually abundant. Pleasance's breast heaved with suppressed sobs of disappointment. She stood on the rock listlessly watching their occupation without being conscious of what they were doing. Presently she heard words which interested her, because she had been made familiar with them for the first time from Edgar—Plymouth the Dock; Colbrook the outfitter. The men were talking of selling their fish there, and who were their best customers.

A sudden resolution took possession of Pleasance. She said in a loud clear voice—

“Master Kere, when you were at Plymouth did you see a big ship—the Isis?”

“Yes, sure, I’ve seen her scores of times. Why does thee want to know, little maid?”

“Oh, thee’st seen her! and all the officers on board?”

“Why, yes, I ’spose so.”

“When was it—yesterday?”

“Yesterday! bless your little heart. The Isis sailed a month ago, come Tuesday.”

Then Pleasance suddenly disappeared, and slipped down the side of the rock, and tried to think and recover herself from the staggering blow dealt her so unconsciously by her informant. He was gone! Could that be true? The voices of the men jarred on her brain. They were sorting the fish in pairs for sale. “Seventeen, eighteen—that’s a fine one—all alive—Tom, hand that lot out. So many that we shall have to sell ’em cheap to get rid of them.” She felt inclined to scream in chorus with the screaming birds, who resented the intrusion of the fishermen on their haunts. The fish were suffocating in

mortal pangs ; those of Pleasance were scarcely less intense. She must get away from those careless voices that seemed to mock her pain.

She fled over the sands, away from human steps, and flung herself down, hiding her face on her arm.

He was gone—he had left her without a word—he was cruel—he had deserted her ! Yet she reproached herself for the passing thought—something unforeseen had happened. If the sun was sure to shine in the heavens, so surely could she count on Edgar's truth and honour. He was dead—or he had been carried away against his will ; but the terrible truth remained that she was deserted. What did she care now for that wretched money ? It had been thought of as a ladder to climb into Edgar's arms—to reach him, so cruelly divided from her by distance ! She should not care now to spend any of it on a new frock or a hat—she did not care for her good looks now. “ Oh, I wish I were dead ! ”

This feeling is common to the young who are unaccustomed to suffering, that they yearn to break away from the galling chain of ad-

verse circumstances. The young horse put into harness plunges and flings himself down in vain efforts to escape suffering which seems intolerable. The old horse strains his galled shoulder against the collar uncomplainingly.

Pleasance felt that she must go away ; she was more unsafe in her grandmother's hut than in the dwelling of a stranger. She was like an animal whose lair is known to the hunters—she might be harried at any hour. She had money ; she would go away somewhere—anywhere. The wealth she had would procure food and lodging. And she started on her journey, taking one of the roads which led from the village, utterly indifferent whither it would lead her, but with the idea of escape.

The hour was so early that none of the cottagers were stirring, and she passed unobserved by their closed doors, and windows curtained by Virginia creepers. The dew, still resting on the foliage, gave expansion to the fresh scent of the sweet-briar, and the aromatic perfume of the bunches of southernwood with which the cottage gardens were planted. There were bunches of white pinks, too, rich in their contributions of fragrance,

and queenly lilies rising from beds of bright nasturtiums, with their circular leaves, each retaining globes of dew to be shaken by the breeze, and then return to the stem-supported centre. These flowers did not grow near the sea, and Pleasance would have lingered to admire them had she not been too wretched to have a thought of their beauty.

At length the doors and windows were flung open ; the men trooped off to their work ; the women made their small arrangements for their children's breakfasts and their own. Pleasance, who had not eaten since one o'clock on the previous day, felt the wolfish appetite of a healthy girl of fifteen. She lingered for a few seconds at the little gate of the cottage garden, and seeing a gentle-looking woman cutting bread at the table, she lifted the latch, and entering the room timidly asked leave to buy a piece of bread, as she was travelling.

The woman looked at her, and said that she might sit down, sweeping the dust from the stool with her apron.

"Where are you thinking of going?" she asked.

"She was going to try to get into service,"

Pleasance replied, "as she did not like working on the mine."

There was a trifle less of kindness in the tone.

"Oh, you are a mine girl! I'm afraid that will be against your getting a place, though some of them are steady."

This was not encouraging, but Pleasance was comforted by eating the slice of bread; and, having finished the crust of it, she looked so earnestly at the loaf that the good-natured hostess supplied the want so piteously implied. The cottager gave her some tea, and when Pleasance had finished the girl put sixpence on the table, and asked if it were enough. At first the woman refused to take it, but on being urged by Pleasance she looked at her children, and put it into a little money-box on the shelf.

Pleasance felt she must go on; but her sense of loneliness and isolation was terrible. To quicken her steps came the remembrance of Pike, and of her grandmother craving for money, so she thanked the kind hostess, and went on her way.

CHAPTER IX.

"Poor is the triumph o'er the timid hare."

WHEN Mr. Pike reached the point of rock projecting into the water, he found that he had to wait till the wave retreated and then take a run to clear the point before the returning billow swept up to the face of the rock.

"It is well that I did not stay any longer with that cross-grained little devil," he thought. "She climbs like a cat. I hope she is not washed away. That stone made her cry out, and she fell directly after. It might be awkward. I did not want to kill her; but no one saw it;" and thus he comforted himself that he was safe even if she were destroyed.

When he was going to bed that night, he took the small articles he generally wore

about him from his pocket, and feeling for his purse could not find it. There was both gold and silver in it, and it contained a larger sum than he was willing to lose. He probably had placed it carelessly in his waistcoat pocket after trying to tempt the girl by its exhibition, and in the violent action of his arm, jerked it out on the sands where its alighting would cause no noise, and in the dim light attract no attention. He wondered if the sea would wash it away. He had better look for it early to-morrow morning. He remembered that the sand on which he was standing at the time was loose, and consequently dry, so that it must have been above the usual height of the tide.

As soon as the water had retired sufficiently on the following day, he left his counting-house and proceeded to the beach. He looked stealthily towards the retreating water, half expecting to see a body tumbled carelessly about in its wild sport: then, more boldly, observing no sign of the spectre his fears had conjured up. The water had not reached the spot on which he had stood when he flung the stone at Pleasance, therefore she had pro-

bably remained in some shelter of the rocks till morning, and had picked up his purse and carried it off with her. "A barefaced robbery," he said; and he ground his teeth, thinking that she had obtained for nothing that which he had offered for certain conditions.

"But she shall pay for this; she shall suffer or my name is not James Pike. I hate the girl, for all the trouble she has given me."

In this mood he ascended the path to the surface of the cliff, determined to go at once to the hut in which Mrs. Fern resided. He knew not of the shorter way made by rude steps cut in the rock, and had he done so, he would scarcely have ventured on a mode of ascent so perilous.

As he walked through the village, he saw the grandmother of Pleasance turn into the small general shop which supplied the inhabitants of Portallack, and hastened on toward her. He entered the shop just as an ounce of tea had been weighed out by the mistress of the shop for her customer, and Mrs. Fern laid down the sovereign she had received from Pleasance on the previous even-

ing, waiting for her change after taking up the parcel.

"Let me look at that sovereign!" he said to the astonished shopkeeper.

"Is it a light one, sir?" she asked.

"Light? no, not so light as some folks are. Pray, Dame Fern," he cried, turning to the old woman, "did not this sovereign come out of my purse?"

Dame Fern had no doubt of it, but she answered, with a curtsey,

"Very like, sir."

"Why, you brazen-faced hag!" he cried, in a fury, "I am astonished at your impudence. Give me the purse, and the rest of the money. Where is it?"

"I am sure," whimpered Mrs. Fern, "I do not know."

"Where did you get this?"

"My grand-daughter gave it to me last night."

"Where is she now?"

"Don't you know, Master Pike?" asked the old woman.

"How should *I* know? You mean to drive me mad! I am robbed of my purse,

and you tell me that I know where the thief is. I don't know where she is now, but I can tell you where she will be before seven days are past, and that is in Bodmin jail."

Mrs. Fern sat down on the stool, placed for customers in front of the counter, and throwing her apron over her eyes, began to rock herself backwards and forwards in violent sorrow.

"Tell me where she is gone!" shouted Mr. Pike.

"Oh! I don't know, sir, she never said; only, says she, 'Grannie, I shall go out early to-morrow, and I don't know when I shall be back,' and she gave me this sovereign, and she did not say that you gave it to her, but she said she had seen you on the beach, and I knew you were a generous gentleman where you take a fancy. As I hope to be saved, I thought you gave it to her, and that you had got a home for her somewhere, poor girl!"

"You infamous old wretch! What do you mean by taking away my character, and I a married man, by hinting that I should take

up with such a shameless little hussy as your grand-daughter? and before this respectable woman, too!"

The respectable woman's sympathies were enlisted on Mr. Pike's side immediately, and she said it was a shame, and no one with any sense could ever think such a thing of such a good gentleman as Mr. Pike.

"Such a bold, bad girl, too, always on the beach with one man or another. My husband and his mate passed her and a young gentleman sound asleep on the sands, just at day-break, where they had passed the night."

Mr. Pike turned livid with jealous rage. That was the reason Pleasance rejected *him*. She had a lover in a young gentleman. He hated her with the hate of hell.

"You have heard this old woman, Mrs. Goodenough, confess that she received that sovereign from her grand-daughter. Very likely I shall require you to give evidence in a court of justice as to the fact. I shall take the piece of gold, which is mine."

"Then you must give me back the ounce of tea, mum," said the woman.

The poor old grandmother saw her hope of

a comfortable cup of tea for her breakfast fast fading, but she put down the little parcel meekly, without a word.

In the meantime Mr. Pike left the shop, with the intention of sending a policeman to take Pleasance Fern, wherever she might be, and of going to the nearest magistrate to take a summons out against Pleasance Fern for the theft of his purse.

"If I look sharp, she may be brought up before the bench next Tuesday, and get a month in jail. Serve her right, little jade."

Whatever rage may possess a woman whose attractions are undervalued by the object she seeks, it is short-lived compared to the sullen ire which burns unceasingly in the breast of a lascivious man, whose advances are rejected with dislike, with loathing. Mr. Pike's desire was turned to hate; he would have enjoyed the sight of Pleasance being flogged, if flogging women could have been permitted. He was half inclined to have her seized and flogged on his own responsibility, and he walked more slowly, to turn the matter over comfortably in his mind. He was such an autocrat in the mine, part owner, too. It

would never be talked about beyond his own parish. It would be easy to stop the old woman's mouth with a couple of sovereigns. The notion of her white shoulders crimsoned with the marks of the cat, and writhing under the repeated lashes, was pleasant to his fancy. If it were ever talked about, it would be easily excused, from the youth of the girl, her being scarcely more than a child, and its being really a humane act to stop her career of wickedness, by a little gentle correction, rather than to expose her to the contamination of a jail. But second thoughts persuaded him that Pleasance would be more likely to come to his terms when she came out of jail.

To jail she was sure to be sent if the magistrate was not an ass. He would call on the nearest resident magistrate to ask for a summons, but in the meantime he must send a policeman after the girl, or she would be gone beyond his reach.

When Pleasance left the cottage, she walked on, but not as briskly as she had done in the morning. She was beginning to weary of her sad journey, with so doubtful a termination. Her daily occupation of sitting under a shed,

washing ore, had not fitted her for pedestrian exertions, neither were her shoes best suited for a long journey on the high road. Presently one went down at the heel, and remained flapping an inconvenient ridge against the sole of her foot. Gravel inserted itself into the other, and she had to stop frequently to empty it out. She tried the side of the road, where the grass was green, and she hoped soft; but turf has the quality of being smooth to the eye and pleasant, but like many a cheerful person, who seems softness itself, it becomes very unequal when pressed upon, or relied on for comfort. So Pleasance did not get much by the change. Towards evening she entered a village.

There was the usual amount of noisy infant life—children clamorous whether pleased or pained, who dart about in the twilight with as little seeming purpose as gnats. There was a village green in the shape of a delta, and on its verge a public-house with a sign-board asserting that there would be "Good entertainment for man and horse" on the premises. Pleasance stood for a moment half deafened by the shouts of the children and

unable to decide on her next step. In the meantime a quarrel had begun amongst them. For some inscrutable cause one of the small boys was knocked down by one of his play-mates, and was immediately set upon by the rest with that fine disregard of fair play which seems to possess all crowds. Pleasance felt for the fallen victim, thinking of her little brother—a cabin boy on board a large ship. She rushed into the midst of the *melée*, and by striking and pushing and scolding she lifted the child in her arms, which brought the assailants on her in full cry.

“What thee waant to meddle a me for?” cried one urchin whom she had lifted off the prostrate foe, and he steadied himself by a fold of her frock and kicked her vigorously.

“Take that,” said another, flinging a handful of gravel in her face.

“Thee art a really meddling hussy,” cried a third, cutting at her with a little switch.

Pleasance was powerless, standing like a huntsman and holding up the prey, but with a wish to save and not to destroy, when, “flying all abroad,” came from the public-

house a masculine woman, who rushed up with fury in her face, with,

"How dare you lay hands on my child, Miss Impudence! Holding him up for these good-for-nothing boys to fling stones at him."

"Mother! mother!" sobbed the boy, "she picked me up, she did, when Jack Holland was jumping on my inside."

This speech seemed an Irishism which was perfectly understood by the person to whom it was addressed.

"I beg your pardon," she said to Pleasance, "I did not understand. Are you hurt, Jim?"

"Nooah," sobbed Jim.

"Well, well, be a good boy."

"Could you tell me, ma'am, where I could get a bed to-night? I am a traveller, and I do not know this part of the country." The woman looked doubtfully at the speaker. "I have money to pay for it."

"Well, gal, I don't mind giving thee a bed as thou wert kind to Jim; come along with me."

So she proceeded, leading Jim, who looked back scowling at the distant enemy, who were making sundry gestures of contempt at the trio unseen by Mrs. Holland,

the keeper of the pothouse. When they reached the door there was such a din of discordant gruff voices of men drinking or quarrelling that Pleasance drew back terrified. "Come round the back way and they won't see thee," said the woman.

She led the girl up a little back staircase into a small room next to her own. The bed was of limited dimensions, but it looked clean, and Pleasance regarded it with a pleasant hope of a quiet night. The woman brought up a piece of bread and cheese and some cider for Pleasance's supper, of which when she had partaken she was glad to undress and go to sleep—glad to rest her weary limbs and aching feet. As she laid her head on the pillow the confused noise of riot and coarse merriment died on her senses, and all anxiety and grief gave way to the most potent of sensations, bodily fatigue.

CHAPTER X.

"I am amazed, and lose my way
Amongst the thorns and dangers of this world."

It was late on the following day when she was awakened by her landlady, who stood by her side.

"Come, young woman, 'tis time to look about you." Pleasance gazed at her with terror and painful remembrances crowding on her mind. She was in a strange room, and a strange and unfriendly face was observing her. "'Tis time to get up and be off. If I did right I should tell the policeman where you are and let him take you to jail, but you were good to little Jim, so you shall have a fair start; but the sooner the better, for them that will take one thing will take another."

"I don't know what you mean, ma'am.

I have taken nothing but the supper you gave me, and that and the bed I will pay for."

She took the purse from under her pillow as she spoke to show the woman she had the means of satisfying her.

"There, as I'm alive 'tis true, sure enough!" cried the woman. "Oh, what a wicked girl you are to steal the gentleman's purse!"

"I never stole the purse; I picked it up."

"Ah! that's what light-fingered gentry always say."

"I declare to you I picked the purse up on the sands. Who says I stole it?"

"The policeman, young woman, who came in here after you were gone to sleep. I heard him a saying how he was a looking for a gal in a canary-coloured frock and blue ribbons in her bonnet who had stole a gentleman's purse. 'Twas lucky them rampaging men did not catch sight of you, or they would have set him on to you soon enough. Thinks I, that canary-coloured frock is a hanging up behind my door, and the gal is sleeping as quiet as a monument, but I was not going to peach upon a poor creetur, 'specially one that is good to children."

"Oh, dear! what can I do? I never stole the purse. What will they do if they catch me? Will they hang me?"

"No, no, not so bad as that, gal; but they may put thee in prison for a month or so. Thee seed, thee ought to have taken the purse back to the gentleman, and made a civil curtsy, and said 'Please, sir, there is the purse you've dropped,' and then very likely he'd a give thee five shillings."

"Oh! I could not do it for fifty shillings—no, nor fifty pounds neither. He is a dreadful gentleman, and the thought of his coming nigh me makes the hair stand upright on my head."

"Well, my dear, that's as it may be; but the question is, how you are to get away from the policeman? You can't stay here, for I expect my daughter and her husband to-day, and their little babe. I had got the room ready for them yesterday, when they disappointed me."

"I will dress myself and go, ma'am; 'tis no matter where: one place is as good or as bad as another for me. And oh, dear! how all my limbs ache, and my feet are blistered."

"Ah!" said the woman, "you ain't used to it. I'll give you a bit of lard for your feet. Keep to the fields near the high road, and don't go into the thoroughfares till you have peeped; but I'll get you some breakfast first, and a piece of victuals to carry with you."

She came up with a cup of smoking hot tea and a piece of thick bread and butter. Placed separately was some bread and a slice of salt beef for her dinner. When Pleasance had taken her breakfast she produced the purse again, and asked her hostess how much she should pay.

"Well, my girl, I think three shillings won't ruin you out of the gentleman's money. I should not like to take more, lest people should say I was a receiver of stolen goods. Where are you going now, and what will you do?"

"Oh, I don't know, I am so miserable."

"Care killed the cat," said the woman; "go to Truro, I've a sister who lives on Pen-calenic Hill; tell her I sent you, and she will try to get you a place, if you will live steady."

Pleasance wiped her eyes, and thanked the hostess, and having the name of the woman and the number of her house written down, she went down stairs quietly, giving a sixpence to little Jim, who was building a grotto of oyster shells outside the back door; then with something more of hope, as she had a motive for her journey, she left the hospitable cottage and the woman who had befriended her.

Pleasance's progress soon became painful; one night had not been enough to allow the inflammation in her feet to subside; the greased rags chafed them, the aggravating shoe flapped against the sole of her foot; she tried the sides of the road, but she caught her feet in the long grass, which seemed to tie itself into knots as she brushed through it. She was determined to take her landlady's advice and turn into a field as soon as possible, but she could not do this at once, as the village was continuous for some little distance. At length she came to a gate, which she climbed over, and alighted in a field which had been recently mowed. There was a man at the side farthest from the road already

breaking it up with his plough. He stopped for a moment and looked at her curiously as she overtopped the locked gate, and then went on with his furrow.

The path of Pleasance was not much easier in the field than in the road; briars, armed with thorns like tigers' teeth, fixed themselves in her frock, and startled her by seeming like a strong hand pulling at her suddenly from the ditch. The country was now an ascent, and she stopped sometimes for breath, looking round fearfully on the village she had left, which contained the emissary of her persecutor. She looked back at the small buildings, and saw the sun gleaming on the cottage windows, and fervently hoped that its rays would not awaken the policeman from whose clutches she was flying. The hill was both high and shelving, so that it took time to ascend. There was a haystack at the summit, and between it and the hedge she sat down to eat some food and to rest; so weary was she, that she began to wonder whether prison would be worse than life as it seemed to her then. But she shrank from the idea of being shut within four close walls.

The poor girl knew nothing of law ; she might be imprisoned for life, for anything she knew to the contrary. It was rather pleasant where she was, cool and fresh after her painful walk, in the shadow of the stack. She sat down, resting her chin on her hand, and her arm on her drawn-up knee, too wearied bodily to feel as acutely as she otherwise would have felt, the desertion of her lover.

The simple objects which surrounded her were regarded curiously in that pause of emotion. She looked at the twisted stems of the convolvulus, dressing up with beauty a gnarled old branch of blackthorn, and felt pleasure in the delicate white cup of the flower, so fragile that a breeze too rude would crush its filmy circumference. A spider was watching her stealthily, and as she made a slight movement, the insect drew together all her eggs, and brooded over them with the devotion of maternity. She saw the movement, and understood it, and then for personal reasons she wept. She had no one to shield her. Surely she was a most unhappy girl, for hunger had turned her only relative and natural protector into her bitter enemy.

The thought of her grandmother recalled that of her persecutor, and by a natural sequence of thought, the policeman, who was his emissary. She looked along the road from the village, which from her elevated height she commanded, and saw a dark, helmeted figure, coming along the road, looking down as if to track the footprints of some animal. A sudden thought made the heart of Pleasance stand still for an instant. She remembered a sharper pain than usual just as she left the village, crossing the road newly laid down with stones, and looking at her foot, she saw that it had been cut, and as the stocking was saturated with blood, it had probably left on the hard ground the marks of her progress, and probably on the gate over which she had climbed.

Now her heart was hurrying on recklessly, as if to make up for lost time, as she saw the man still stooping over the road, till he held up his nose, like a hound at fault. He had lost the trace, and had passed the gate, and Pleasance breathed more freely. He could not tell that the blood had oozed from *her* foot; it might have proceeded from some

wounded animal. After walking on for a brief space, he halted, and Pleasance again turned faint with terror. She saw him turn back and examine the bars of the gate. Presently he sprung over it—so easily compared to the weary efforts of poor Pleasance—and she saw him walk over the stubble towards the man who was ploughing. They talked together for a moment, then the ploughman's arm was extended in the direction which Pleasance had taken. Then she felt that her doom was decided. She could not fly before that tall, strong man, with any hope of outstripping him, weak and wearied as she was. She had a confused notion that the policeman would carry her back to Mr. Pike, and her flesh quivered with a shuddering horror at that thought.

Exhausted and footsore, she arose with the instinct for flight, but the pain in her wounded foot was so sudden and severe as she stood on it, that she stumbled and nearly fell. Then like a pigeon who sees a kite hovering in the air, cowers on the ground in the desperate effort to efface itself from her enemy's vision, Pleasance crawled under the bushes of black-

thorn, and the arching brambles, and hid in the dry ditch inside the long grasses. If she remained quite still perhaps she might escape. She lay motionless, listening. The policeman could not come up to her yet, unless he had possessed seven-leagued boots, yet she dreaded lest her breathing should, by ruffling the fibrous grass, with its tufted bloom, reveal her hiding-place. She speculated as to whether her foot had bled since she entered the grass field. She hoped, if so, that it might not be detected. Presently she heard the field gate slam against its posts. He was coming. She fancied, from the silence, that he had paused to cast his eyes round the field. Naturally his attention was first directed to the hay-stack. Pleasance heard his step approach her hiding-place. Silently he walked round the stack, and, seemingly satisfied, the tramp of his heavy feet seemed to be departing ; yet she remained motionless for some minutes longer, hoping to hear the click of the gate again, in proof that he had gone ; but there was no sound so welcome. On the contrary, he seemed to be coming back. Then the breath of Pleasance came shorter and

shorter. He was close to her hiding-place now. A strong arm was thrust through the bushes, a nervous grasp was placed on her shoulder; she gave a faint cry of despair, and then terror was lost in insensibility, for the form the policeman dragged from the hiding-place had sunk into the semblance of a corpse.

CHAPTER XI.

"A prisoner, led away with heavy heart."

"HERE'S a pretty piece of business," said the policeman. "What am I to do with this baggage?"

He left her lying on the ground, and went to the gate. Presently a labourer passed, and he gave the man sixpence to call at the next post-house and hire a gig to convey his prisoner, for from the state of her feet he saw that she would be unable to walk even half a mile.

When Pleasance awoke to consciousness from her death-like trance, she was seized with a spasm of hope that her captor had left her. She sat up, and twisted her disordered hair away from her eyes, behind her ears, and looked round her, to see him regarding her

with the quiet consciousness of power shown by the cat when she sits ready to put her paw on a miserable mouse, which has, by lying still in the pause of exhaustion, to be re-awakened to fresh torments.

A bright idea possessed her, and she staggered to her feet, and limping towards the policeman, she pulled the purse from her pocket, and gave it into his hand.

"There it is, sir, that's what I found, only a little taken out ; and now, good, kind gentleman," said the girl, falling on her knees, "take the purse and go your ways, and let me go mine. It can't do anybody good that a poor thing like me should be shut up in prison."

"Thieves must be punished, young woman, else what did God make policemen for ? You must come with me, and get what the law gives. Can't you tuck your hair under your bonnet, and look a little more decent. I feel right down ashamed to be seen sitting by the side of the like of you."

Pleasance humbly strove to obey. He lifted her into the gig which was driven up by a boy, and they proceeded to the next

town, where she was to be examined by the magistrate, previous to her committal to prison.

On arriving at the magistrate's house Pleasance felt very sinful indeed by comparison with all she saw. How much of this sinful consciousness resulted from the contrast between herself, and the trimly-dressed young women who went in and out of the back door in their well-fitting dresses of lilac gingham, snowy aprons, and neat little caps with lilac ribbons, I will not stop to inquire. She felt that she was dowdy, and they were the perfection of neatness. They never wanted their four meals daily, nor their ample wages paid quarterly, whilst she had stolen, if stealing it could be called, because she and her grandmother wanted bread. Their young heads went close together as they looked at Pleasance and whispered, and the poor girl caught the sounds of, "No better than she should be." True, she was no better than she should be; few folks are; but probably neither of the scoffers would have been more firm in the hours of similar temptation.

The female servants were not the only observers of the detected criminal. In a luxuriously furnished boudoir sat the wife of the master of the property and her little boy. He had married a widow from juxta-position. It is a very great cause of matrimonial unions. The Honourable Mr. Seaward had been left trustee and executor to a college friend, and the guardian of his boy. He was a shy man. All the more shy from his being short-sighted. He had neither mother nor sister to arm him against the wiles of the plump little widow, who looked kindly on the man who was labouring for her benefit and for her boy's. The property when realized amounted to only about seven hundred per annum. Clarinda Forrester knew that she could not enjoy the comforts of seven thousand a year on seven hundred, and she determined that Algeron Seaward should marry her. It was true that she was ten years older than he, but love is blind, and especially so in the perceptions of short-sighted men. Algeron married her, and if not supremely blest he was exceedingly comfortable.

Clarinda was perfection in her own eyes.

She looked at her little plump figure and meaningless features in the glass, and took them as the standard of all beauty. Perhaps her husband was sometimes bored by the purity and primness of her mental perceptions which were ever shrinking back lest they should be polluted. "Turn away mine eyes lest they behold iniquity" was ever her prayer, and she would as soon have placed the point of her delicately booted toe into a puddle, as she would have read a police case in which an unfortunate woman was mentioned. She sat in a luxurious chair which stood in the window looking out on the old courtyard. The curtains against which the chair had pressed cost thirty shillings per yard, and had been chosen by the lady herself. The colour silver grey, which caught silver gleams in the rich folds. She never forgot that she had been a widow, and liked guests to be reminded thereof. There was something respectable, she thought, in the circumstances of her double matrimony. It proved her feminine attractions and her moral worth.

Standing up before her, with fair curls hanging on his velvet-clad shoulders, and his

hands behind him, stood a child of eight years saying his Catechism. On the lady's lap was the Book of Common Prayer. The pretty boy was inattentive.

" 'Honour thy'——. 'Well!' cried Mrs. Seaward.

"Mamma! there is a poor woman and a policeman in a cart. Oh! she can't walk; he is lifting her."

Mrs. Seaward looked out and withdrew her eyes hastily.

"A wicked woman taken up. Do not look at her."

The footman entered the room with a note.

Mrs. Seaward had seen that the girl was beautiful, and she felt both dislike and curiosity about her.

"Who are those people in the courtyard?"

"A girl took up for stealing a gentleman's purse, mem."

"An abandoned woman," cried the lady.

"Go on, Cassillis. 'Sixth, thou shalt not steal;' that comes of stealing."

"Will they put her in prison, mamma?"

"Yes; I'm sure she deserves penal servitude," said the lady, who had always had what she wanted without stealing.

Pleasance was conducted into the library of the magistrate, who was eating his luncheon and could not be disturbed. Her eyes took in with wonder the rows of books, which gave her the idea that the gentleman possessed a monopoly of all the volumes the world contained. She had thought how much she should like to learn to read at one time. That trivial step on the ladder of learning she had believed would have raised her nearer Edgar ; but Edgar had gone, and she had now no interest in improvement. Perhaps it was well that he did not know the disgrace which had fallen upon her.

The magistrate entered, and with him Mr. Pike. They seated themselves at the library table. The poor culprit stood near the door next to the policeman.

"Stand forward where I can see you," said the magistrate, who was rather short-sighted.

Pleasance came near the table. Her face was downcast, her eyelids red ; but nothing could disguise the beauty of the perfect oval of her face, nor could her torn and soiled dress conceal the slender proportions of her graceful figure.

"You are charged with stealing a purse from this gentleman, Mr. Pike. What have you to say?"

Pleasance unclosed her parched lips, but her dry tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. She looked longingly at a bottle of water and a tumbler which stood on the table, but was afraid to ask for it.

"What have you to say to the charge?" the magistrate reiterated.

"I did not steal the purse, sir," she said.

"How did you, then, possess yourself of it?"

"I picked it up on the sands after he was gone."

"You did not know that it belonged to your master, to Mr. Pike," suggested the magistrate, most illegally.

The girl looked up very innocently.

"Yes, sir, I did know it, for I had seen it in his hands ten minutes before he dropped it."

The gentleman's face fell at this admission.

"I see I must send her to prison till tomorrow, when the bench meet," he said sadly, and made out her committal.

Pleasance looked at him, and with a sudden burst of anguish she clasped her hands and cried—

“Oh! please, sir! do not send me to prison! Mr. Pike, have pity on me! I gave the purse back to the policeman. There is only one sovereign gone and a shilling or so, because I was so hungry.”

“You must go with the policeman, young woman,” said the magistrate.

Mr. Pike looked at Pleasance over his shoulder with an expression of such malignity that the girl shrank and gathered herself close to the policeman.

“I am to go with you, am I not?” she asked.

When they got outside she questioned him.

“Where are you going to take me?”

“To jail,” answered the man.

“Master, that Mr. Pike can’t get to me there, can he?”

“No, my dear, they’ll take good care of that; ’tis not such a bad place, only you can’t get out.”

“I don’t mind if he does not come after me,” moaned Pleasance.

"You don't seem to like the gentleman?" inquired the man, but the girl made no reply; she was too weary.

Pleasance awoke to weep about four o'clock, when the light streamed in through the high window of her cell. She had been too much exhausted by fatigue to have any more tears to shed on being thrust into prison. Poor Pleasance had not much spirit or determination of character, but a great power of loving and unwavering constancy to the man whom she considered her affianced husband. The next day at eleven o'clock she, being unable to walk, was taken in a cart to the building in which the bench of magistrates sat. When asked if she had anything to say, she exclaimed, as she had done before, that she had not stolen the purse—only picked it up.

"Was she cognizant of the fact that the purse belonged to her master?"

A denial was anticipated, but she said,

"Yes, she had seen it in his hands just before."

The clerk longed to ask Mr. Pike, who was present, how it happened that he had exhibited his purse on the beach, but felt he

had no business to indulge his legal curiosity. One of the magistrates whispered to Mr. Pike, who whispered back a summary conviction—

“I would not be hard on the poor girl.”

Pleasance therefore was sentenced to a fortnight's imprisonment.

“You don't get badly out of it; you have your purse back with the loss only of a few shillings and one sovereign,” said the magistrate, who was Mr. Pike's acquaintance.

“Exactly so,” said that worthy man, who did not say that he had already regained the sovereign from the old grandmother, and that four shillings altogether would cover his pecuniary loss. “And I would willingly have paid forty pounds for the pleasure of punishing the proud slut,” he said to himself.

CHAPTER XII.

"From prison free I starve abroad."

DRYDEN.

So Pleasance was taken back to jail for her fourteen days' incarceration. She seemed so ill when she reached the building that the surgeon was sent for and directed that she should be taken to the hospital. There she lay unconscious of all around her for twenty-one days in the impotent violence of fever. She was carefully if not kindly tended; and when she could move at the end of a month she was told that she was free. She had no money to pay her journey home, and one of the nurses directed her to apply for a small sum for that purpose, which was, she was told, her right; so she stood outside the jail with four shillings and sixpence in her hand

uncertain whither to direct her steps. She walked away from the jail; its vicinity was a mark of her disgrace. Wandering down one of the streets she saw a mine girl, an old acquaintance, who stopped and addressed her.

"You have been away a good bit," said she.

"I have been ill," replied Pleasance evasively.

"So has your grandmother; she is very bad."

"Oh!" cried Pleasance with an expression of pain, "don't tell me that."

"Well, gel, I won't tell you if you don't like to hear, but when she heard you was took she had a stroke, and she lost the use of one side and her face is drawed dreadful to see."

"Who is a-nursing her?" asked Pleasance, hurriedly, feeling all her former tenderness revive for her helpless grandmother.

"Oh, sometimes one and sometimes another looks in; no one reg'lar."

Pleasance bade her adieu and turned towards home. She gave a man in a cart sixpence to give her a lift on her journey.

When he turned off from the direction in which she was going she travelled on on foot. She forgot her terror of Mr. Pike in this new anxiety. It was evening before she reached the hut on the cliff—a grey unlovely twilight. She paused at the door with an unreasoning terror of what she might discover when she entered the cabin, where all was dark. Suddenly there was a plaintive cry from the interior, and Pleasance, recognizing the voice of her grandmother, hastened to her bedside.

“I am here, grannie! I am here! Pleasance is come back!” but there was no sense of recognition in the maundering sounds which were escaping from, rather than being formed by, her grandmother’s lips. The darkness increased the terror of Pleasance and her helplessness. She groped about to find an end of candle or a lucifer match, but neither were in their usual places. The querulous complaints from her grandmother’s lips constantly reiterated filled her with pain and irritation. “Grannie, for God’s sake be quiet a minute while I try to get a light;” but the impatience of Pleasance’s tone, however unintentional, pierced the dull brain, which still quivered

to painful impressions, though still impervious to the gentler tones of affection, and the old woman cried like a rated hound. Then Pleasance was conscience-stricken: she gave way to her tears, and feeling for the chair, she seated herself by the old woman's bed-side, and possessing herself of the hand, so death-like in its dull weight and immobility, she tried to chafe it into sensibility. Seemingly the patient was unconscious of her efforts; she continued the unvarying expressions of childish suffering, which Pleasance could do nothing to alleviate. Even when our position seems to shut out hope or expectation, some glimmer shows through the closely-clamped stones of our dungeon.

"If the morning would but come—when the sun rises I shall be able to make her better," moaned the girl to herself. "Oh! they are cruel to leave a poor old woman alone like this!" she cried.

She sat there for a time, which seemed interminable, but really not more than an hour and three quarters. During this period her grandmother seemed to be making insane efforts to push herself out of the bed. Pleas-

sance had to exert her whole force to prevent this. At length she heard footsteps behind her, which, in the excited state of her nerves, made her add a wild cry of terror to the incessant wailings of her grandmother.

"Well," said a middle-aged woman, coming in with a lantern, "I declare thou'rt enough to scart the soul out of the body, as if it wasn't frightish enough to come and tend this poor old silly, without thy setting up thy pipes to make it worse."

"Oh, neighbour Sibly, I couldn't help it. It was all dark, and grannie does go on so, and I could not find a bit of candle nor a lucifer, though I felt all over the room."

"I wasn't going to leave any where the old creeter could get them; set her clothes alight very likely, and be burnt to death." She showed Pleasance where she had hidden some lucifers and a rush candle. "I am late, you see," said the kind-hearted woman; "but lor! you see I had the potatoes to get for my old man's supper, and then there was the children to get to bed, and I persuaded daddie to take little Sallie to sleep in his arms. All that took time, for men want a deal of coaxing

to get them to do what's right. Now 'tis a comfort you're come, for after I've done for the old woman, I can go back again, and 'you can see to her through the night."

CHAPTER XIII.

“Friend of distress! the mourner feels thy aid;
She cannot pay thee, but thou shalt be paid.”

THEY carried the frail, withered body, so light in its attenuation, to the back room, and placed her on Pleasance's bed whilst her own was made; then some bread and milk, begged from a neighbouring farmer, was put into her mouth, some of which she swallowed.

After they had lifted her back to her own bed, the neighbour told Pleasance that she would come on the following morning, and remain near the old woman whilst she went to the board of guardians to beg for some relief for her grandmother and herself, as her leaving the old woman to go to work would not be possible.

Mrs. Sibly's presence had put comfort into the heart of the poor girl. Her return on the following morning was something to which she might look forward. She sat on a little three-legged stool by the side of the senseless woman through the long hours of night, lighted only by the dim small flame of the rush candle. The roar of the unceasing waves, with the prolonged *sish-h-h* they made on the sands, sounded inexpressibly dreary ; the shadows in the corners of the room seemed to move into spectral forms. She closed her eyes, and clung to her grandmother's half dead hand for protection. Thus she fell asleep to awake to more of hope, as the sun, striking through the small window, seemed to extinguish the light of the candle. She moistened the dry lips of the patient, and placed her pillow more easily.

At nine o'clock Mrs. Sibly came, and said she would stay till Pleasance returned, for she must walk three miles to Beechtree to ask the board of guardians for an allowance for herself and grandmother. Pleasance found a pair of her own old shoes in the hut, not so worn as those she had spoilt on her travels.

She tried to make herself look decent in some clothes she had not considered worth carrying away in her flight; then scared and shame-faced, and feeling that every one who passed her knew that she had just come out of gaol, she entered the town of Beechtree, and making her way to the building which contained the poor of the union, she took her place amongst the rest of the crowd who were waiting to have their weekly dole decided on. The old women looked at her indifferently, the younger ones with spiteful curiosity. At length she was called in.

"What is your name and business?" said the chairman, who had been the committing magistrate, but had forgotten all about the girl.

She stood up, and a faint crimson flush rose on her lovely face. "If you please, sir, I want some out-door relief for my grandmother; she has had a stroke, sir, and has lost the use of one side."

There was a pause, and the magistrate who sat next to the chairman whispered to him; his face becomes stern, "Bad character, eh? Thief?—eh? just out of gaol?"

Pleasance heard it all, and hung her head.

"Two shillings and a loaf for the old woman; we must be liberal to the helpless. She won't trouble us long, probably," said the chairman.

"Would you please to allow me something for myself?" asked Pleasance.

"What are your hands for, you idle baggage? Why do you not work on the mine?"

"I can't leave grannie very well," said the girl, "and Mr. Pike has turned me off the mine."

"No wonder," said the magistrate, who was Mr. Pike's acquaintance, "when you robbed your benefactor."

"These creatures have no gratitude," said another.

"One loaf and a shilling a week for the girl Pleasance Fern," said the chairman, "call the next case."

Pleasance was hurried out, the overseer giving her the money and the loaves.

The work at the union was nearly over, and whilst Pleasance was toiling along over the dusty road, she was overtaken by the Chairman of the Bench of Magistrates, who

was also Chairman of the Board of Guardians. He was a cheerful, pleasant-eyed gentleman, with a fresh colour—one whom the world treated kindly. He looked at the seeming feebleness of the girl carrying the loaves, and remembered something of her having escaped prison discipline by being in the hospital of that building.

His broad shoulders and stalwart frame made the light cart sway as he swept round the corner which brought him on the track of the wayfarer. He looked the picture of comfort in his light great-coat and summer hat, with a good cigar, which expended its fragrance on the air.

He pulled up the high-couraged horse.

“Would you like a lift on your way, girl?” he asked kindly.

“Oh, I should be so thankful, sir,” replied the girl.

He gave her a hand, and inquired where her grandmother’s cottage stood.

Then he said gently that he should not have thought by her countenance that she was a bad girl. He was sorry to think she had stolen her master’s money; it seemed so ungrateful.

"I did not steal it—I picked it up," said Pleasance.

"Thieves always say that."

"Indeed I did, sir," said Pleasance, with a little sob.

"Well, how did it happen, then?"

"I picked it up on the sands, when he was gone."

"What were you doing on the sands? Do you mean the beach?"

"Yes, sir, the beach just above high watermark; leastways, the waters do come up there when it is rough, but not often in the summer time."

"How did you know it was your master's purse?"

"Please, sir, he took it out and held it up, to show it to me. He said, 'I'll give this to you if you will come down.'"

"Come down! Why, girl, you were not upstairs; you said you were on the beach just now."

Mr. Seward restrained the pace of his horse—he thought he should have to put Pleasance out before he heard the end of the story.

"She is wonderfully pretty," he thought.

Pleasance paused. "Please, sir, I don't like

to tell you, but I was afraid ; it was getting dark, and when I saw master coming after me, I was terrified, and I clambered up the rocks, but I could not get very high"—here she precipitated her words, and flushed crimson—"I thought he would catch hold of me, but I was too high for that ; I'd rather the waves should swallow me up than that he should put a hand near me. When I would not come down, he flung a stone and cut my arm—*there !*" she said, indignantly pulling up the sleeve of her frock, and showing a scar on her round arm.

"What a brute !" said Mr. Seaward.

"Yes, sir, that's what I thought ; to hurt a *gel* so,—'twas cruel. He stooped to pick up another stone to fling, and just then I swung myself round a corner out of sight. I dared not go home all night, and when the sun rose, I saw the purse shining on the sands like silver and gold, which it was, and steel beads. I was afraid of master, and I went home and gave grannie a sovereign, and when I had tied up a little bundle, I went away. I thought I'd go to a fresh place, and get a situation as nurse girl, and then I saw the policeman coming after me, and I was took"—and here

her voice broke into a sob—"but I never thought it was stealing."

Mr. Seaward was silent.

"My poor girl, there are many excuses to be made for you," he said at length. "What a scoundrel he must be to try to lead a girl into sin."

"Oh!" replied Pleasance, "he is always like that after some gel or other. Maybe some like him, but it makes me feel cold water run down my back to think of him."

Thus spake Pleasance, utterly blind to the heinous nature of the sin; her indignation was expended on the personal attack by the stone, and by Mr. Pike's spite, as she called it, in having her sent to prison for stealing the purse which he had previously offered her.

"What will you do now?" asked the Chairman of the Board of Guardians.

"I must nurse grannie, sir."

"Are you afraid that Mr. Pike will come after you again?"

"Oh-h-h!" cried Pleasance; "he never *could* take me away from grannie's bedside. I don't leave her, only to get the allowance."

"Well, my poor girl, your grandmother may live long, or may die soon. If you want to be helped to a situation when she is gone, I will try to get a lady to take you, away at some distance off from this place. There is my card ; it will tell you where to find me. You may call or you may write," he continued, utterly unsuspecting that Pleasance could not form a single letter ; "here is half-a-crown to help you to nurse your grandmother, and may God bless you and keep you in safety and innocence.—She's beautiful now I'm close to her."

Pleasance made her little curtsey as she stood in the road with her two loaves, and thought Mr. Seaward was the nicest gentleman she had ever seen but one. To be sure he had whiskers and his upper lip was dark, and his cheeks did not look like a peach, as Edgar's used ; but, poor gentleman, he was very kind-hearted, and he could not help being old—he looked quite eight and twenty, or, perhaps, thirty—a very well-looking gentleman, but not like her dear boy.

The ride he had given her had expedited her journey so that Mrs. Sibly's

patience had not been exhausted by waiting for her.

She found the old woman in the same state, and resumed her watch, which was painful and weary, because unlighted by hope.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I'm sure care is an enemy to life."

SHAKESPEARE

MARGARET PETREL'S step was slower, and her brow more anxious than ever. In the nursery sat a respectable-looking woman, busy in drawing up an ugly little cap which was to encircle the brow of the little Petrel which had not as yet breathed the stormy air of this cold world. Mrs. Petrel hated the monthly nurse and the child that was coming, and all the expenses thereunto belonging. The nurse *would* come, because she had finished with her last mistress, and did not like to stay in the interim at the house of her son John, whose wife was close fisted and tidy; or at the dwelling of her daughter, who was a "poor creature" whose husband

beat her occasionally when he returned from the public-house, and left a few stray marks with his fist on the person of his mother-in-law. Every married woman in Mrs. Petrel's unhappy circumstances was eager to have Nurse Rye ; and Mrs. Petrel knew that she would be snapped up by Mrs. Gould, the banker's wife, if she did not take her into the house at once.

Mr. Jasper Petrel was driven to the small bed in the dressing-room, whilst the sofas were again put into requisition for Nurse Rye, in the bedroom usually occupied by the clergyman and his wife.

He did not at all object to the dressing-room. The large sofa bed was a comfortable one. There are compensations which the fondest husbands feel in a solitary couch sometimes. The notion of another infant did not disturb him ; trouble fell from the surface of his feelings like water from the plumage of a duck. It would all come right some day or other he would say ; and he would toss off his XXXX Bass, or his choicest sherry, feeling that he did not care how many children came if he did not suffer. Wandering thoughts

came into his head that he would keep to the dressing-room in future, and would not have his rest disturbed by the new baby. It never had been disturbed hitherto, and he had no reason for supposing that this infant would be worse than its predecessors; but Margaret, though a very good woman, had an unpleasant way of suggesting reductions of expenditure after a fashion, and on subjects in which her interference was simply an impertinence. What was it to her that he chose to have two men to clip his horse, and permit them to live in the house two days whilst they did so? What right had a lady—and his wife was a lady—to walk past the stables, and find the men playing chuck farthing whilst the horse was standing half clipped and shivering? Ladies have no business to interfere in such matters. Of course the men were idle scoundrels, but they clipped well when they did work. Then her suggestion as to paying ready money was very tiresome. When a man has had a hard day (query—when could Jasper Petrel have passed one, excepting in the shooting season?) it was very tiresome to be awakened at four

in the morning with the remembrance of an unpaid bill dangled before your mental vision by the gentle partner of your bed, or prevented from seeking kind nature's soft restorer by the vivacity of her elocution.

Things were in this state at Birchland Rectory when Mr. Petrel received a letter with the postmark, "Plymouth," on the outside. Mrs. Petrel had been called away to weigh out Nurse Rye's tea when she wanted to meet the post, in the hope of hearing from Edgar. Mr. Petrel, with a quick twinkling glance of triumph in his eye, went himself, and seeing the one with the west country postmark amongst a heap of others, he put it in his pocket with a sense of importance at having a secret apart from his wife. He supposed it would keep till cigar time came, and a stroll within the garden walks. The crisp bacon ought to be eaten hot, and a soft egg cold was simply intolerable. There was a fragment of an old song learnt in his bachelor days which was often on his lips, and by which he squared his practice.

"Then let the world wag as it will
I'll be free and easy still."

"Free and easy!" his voice mounted up;
"free and easy!" and then with an exuberance of triumph—

"I'll be free and easy still!"

concluded the strain.

Margaret came back to the table with a cross look, at the thought that Nurse Rye might have been contented with the kitchen or nursery tea-brewing, or what came from the breakfast-room, and not required her half-pound to herself. She was the more put out of temper from the conviction that very little of the tea would be consumed at the Rectory, and that it would find its way divided scrupulously into the small tea-caddies of her daughter-in-law and her daughter. Nurse Rye thought if she went without, or drank other people's leavings, she was entitled to do what she pleased with her own.

Mr. Petrel finished his eggs and bacon, and deliberately lighted his cigar at the kitchen fire, leaving the papers and letters on the breakfast-table, all but the one in his pocket, and strode into the walled garden.

"From Captain Malcolm; that is his hand.

writing," said the father. "That boy must have been getting into a scrape—money, I suppose."

He felt a little reluctance to open it, and put it into his pocket, as if he could escape the fact in escaping the consciousness of it. "Let me enjoy this cigar first," he said, but the letter felt like some explosive substance which might go off and spoil all his comfort at any moment. "Here goes, then," he groaned, and took it out.

" 'DEAR SIR,

" 'I regret to inform you——' There! I knew it was something unpleasant, 'that Mr. Midshipman Petrel——' what a d—d cramped piece of penmanship, as Tony Lumpkin says, too bad to require an interpreter for every word that holds back something unpleasant, 'has had a——' what?—'severe'—yes, 'severe reprimand——' no, that's not it—'ac-accident——' oh, accident—'severe accident——' Poor fellow!—eh? what?—'fallen from the mast-head, where he went to take an observation.' Bless me! why could he not make observations on deck? He can-

not be dead!" and the father, in his trouble, whiffed his cigar spasmodically, and began to walk so fast that he could scarcely read. He found at length, however, that Edgar was lying with a fractured skull in the Hospital, and that the "Isis" had sailed without him; the captain had sent him on shore, where he could be more carefully attended than on board.

"Ah!" said Mr. Petrel, "a sick man on board ship is the devil and all, I've heard sailors say. What's the date? Two days ago! Why, he's dead, probably, by this time; and Margaret, I must tell her. Bless my soul! break it to her, as 'tis called, as if any breaking could help the breakage."

While Mr. Petrel was deliberating he finished one cigar and began another, and when he could no longer retain the end of the second between his fingers without burning them, he went in to speak to Margaret.

"What is it?" she said, for Mr. Petrel's face showed unusual gravity.

"My dear," he said, "Edgar has met with an accident—a serious one. I think I shall just run down and see him. Let me see,

to-day is Tuesday, I shall be able to be back by Saturday."

"What is it?—where is he?" asked Mrs. Petrel, with a face like ashes. "Let me see the telegram."

"'Tis not a telegram—a letter from the captain," and her husband produced it.

A look of intense pain came over the poor mother's face. "And I cannot go to him?"

"No, my dear, no, but *I* can; and without flattery, I may say that if the poor fellow was sensible, which is not likely, he would, I am sure, prefer that I should be with him," added the father;

"Regardless of wringing and breaking a heart,
Already to sorrow resigned."

She felt there was truth in what he said, and the consciousness did not make it more pleasant. She turned the letter round, and deciphered a postscript,—“It seems almost a fatality,” added the captain, “for he had but a few hours before returned from leave, when this sad accident happened.”

“Leave! where can he have spent his leave?” asked the mother, perplexed.

"Why, my dear, you made it so deuced unpleasant to the boy at home."

"I am sure I did not," replied the wife.

"No doubt you did not mean to do it, but he could not but feel that he was one too many."

"Oh! that they all are," said the weary woman.

"Well, very likely he went out and enjoyed himself a bit. He was a very steady boy, and not likely to get into mischief. At any event, he seemed to have got to the ship all right, and the accident took place there."

"I cannot go to him," said Margaret, in a choked voice.

"No, my dear, of course not. I suppose I must, though 'tis unpleasant—very."

"Why, of course you must go," she cried, with an angry wail in her voice, "not that you can do any good."

"Well," said the father, "of course it would be a satisfaction to see the last of him, poor boy!"

"How can you say such things? People recover from fractured skulls."

"Not often;" said he. "Besides, it may not

be fractured ;" and then Margaret wept both for herself and for the bygone sufferings of the Queen Amélie and the Citizen King.

It had often wrung her heart to read of the wretched queen running for two miles through the streets of Paris, too impatient to wait for the royal carriage, and of the miserable hours when she and his father watched the prolonged agonies of so much of stalwart strength and physical beauty till the death, which they had at length prayed for, supervened. The young prince, so worshipped by his mother, so beloved by his family, had died of a similar injury.

Would Edgar live? Alas! she had no time for tears, she must go and pack Mr. Petrel's portmanteau, and be sure that everything necessary for his comfort was placed within it. At length she got him off, intreating him to telegraph as soon as he reached the hospital and had seen Edgar. The idea of his death was terrible to her. There were so many harsh tones in her voice to repent of—so many little indulgences withheld with a too rigid regard for economy—too little consideration for one whose temptations were infinitely greater, and whose strength was

mentally less, as it had not been petrified in the waters of affliction, as are graceful young branches which have lain for years in mineral waters. She had a longing desire to go to him herself, but in her state it was impossible, she could only remain,

“ Hushed in patient wretchedness at home,”

CHAPTER XV.

“ When Jack light-hearted throws his cares aside,
A double burthen on his wife must bide.
He trills his merry songs the whole day through
Whilst she for wine must press the bitter rue.”

MR. PETREL travelled down without stopping, and took rooms at the Bull Hotel before he went to the hospital. He also ordered a tender rump-steak, his plate to be rubbed with a shalot; some bass and some sherry. I must keep myself up, he said—grief is so depressing. Then, having directed his repast to be ready in an hour's time, he went to the hospital, and sent his name to the medical director with a few written lines, stating that he was the father of Mr. Midshipman Petrel, and begged for permission to see him.

The doctor came down, and, looking very grave, stated that his son was still alive,

though he could not answer for his state from one half hour to another. All he could say was that he had seen one case as bad, which recovered, but truth compelled him to add that it was but one in eighty-seven. Bleeding from the ears was a bad symptom, and that still continued. But Mr. Petrel had swallowed some fluid which was favourable.

“I hope you will permit me to see my son?”

The doctor looked doubtfully at the speaker. He did not seem as if he was a man likely to be too much overwhelmed by an ugly sight.

“You will understand, sir, that your son’s life depends on perfect quiet, and any burst of emotion on your part would be fatal to him; for even if no consciousness of trouble exist as to individuals, no one can tell what suffering sound may produce in an irritable brain. I was once insensible myself, and a medical friend accidentally struck the tip of the measuring glass against the tumbler into which he was about to pour a restorative. I shall never forget the clashing, vibrating, agonizing sounds which echoed through

every chamber of my brain ; and it has made me ever careful since to avoid any noise which might produce similar suffering in persons said to be insensible to all external circumstances."

"Notwithstanding the poignancy of my feelings as a father," said Mr. Petrel, sentimentally, "I can restrain any exhibition of them which might damage my dear son. You will understand, sir, that I have left at home my wife expecting her confinement hourly, and she will not be satisfied unless she knows that I have seen her boy."

"Follow me, then," said the doctor ; and they went softly through the long corridor till they came to the dormitory in which Edgar was lying.

Mr. Petrel was not a man of any imagination, and had not conjured up any picture of what the reality might be. Consequently, he turned white and staggered at the sight before him, whilst the doctor grasped his arm with a gesture of impatience to recall and support him. A nurse was placing cold rags on Edgar's head, the face was grey and death-like, and there was a stain on the pillow under

his ear. There was no movement in the inert limbs, only a laboured heaving of the chest. Inexpressibly shocked, Mr. Petrel looked at the poor youth, so different from the manly young fellow who had left Birchland Rectory a few weeks before. The doctor, retaining his hold on the father's arm, drew him out of the room; who, when safely out of the precincts of the sick room, leaned his head against the wall of the corridor and wept bitterly.

"Yes," said the doctor, "it is a sad sight. We are accustomed to such things here, and our hearts become hardened without any fault of our own. The feelings are indurated, as much as the palm of the labourer by the daily use of the spade."

Mr. Petrel wiped his eyes, and said,

"Is it possible that poor fellow should ever recover?"

"Yes, it is possible."

And with that small consolation Mr. Petrel went back to the hotel to write a line to Margaret, and tell her that the doctor entertained hopes of Edgar's recovery.

This was overstating the fact, but Mr.

Petrel tinted his communications rose colour ; Mrs. Petrel, taking them at their right value, was seldom comforted thereby.

By the time the letter was written and given to the waiter to post, for Mr. Petrel did not like the trouble of going out again with it, he thought dinner must be ready. The information he had given his wife he began to believe himself. The image of Edgar suffering faded away. No doubt the boy would recover. And when the waiter, having kept him in the hungry pleasures of anticipation by the sight of the spotless damask and old embossed cruet-stand, brought up the hot plate and a dish of well cooked smelts, Mr. Petrel sat down and enjoyed his dinner, which had the appetizing effect of an unfamiliar cook.

"I owe it to myself," he said swallowing quickly a glass of sherry to give him an appetite, which really was unnecessary, "under these trying circumstances to keep myself up. Margaret and the rest of the children depend on my life ;" here another glass of sherry followed the first. "I must not allow care to make inroad into my constitution for their sake."

The steak was tender and juicy, and cooked to a turn, the cheese of that delicious newness which can only be obtained at an hotel, where the consumption is like the war song of old Timotheus—"never ending, still beginning." He drank his Bass, and finished after the old fashion by a glass of port wine. He scorned dessert.

"I never indulge in needless expenses," he said. Then, having asked for and obtained the day's paper, he looked at it hazily for a few minutes, and let it drop on his knees; from thence it fell to his feet. His head went back on the edge of the easy chair, and he slept till the waiter came in and clattered the fire-irons, when the anxious father started up, not remembering where he was.

"Will you please to take tea or coffee, sir?"

"Coffee, without sugar or cream. I have had a long journey, and if my room is ready I shall go to bed."

When the waiter was gone to post the letter to Mrs. Petrel he saw that it had begun to rain, and decided that it could not matter whether it went that night or next morning, the result being that Margaret

greeted the empty post-bag with a look of white disappointment, and had to wait another day for news of her son.

When Edgar Petrel was going in for his examination as naval cadet he became acquainted with another candidate who was not as well prepared as himself. He was a delicate boy, and seemingly in bad circumstances pecuniarily, for his mother was involved in a lawsuit, which swallowed up nearly all her income, and of which the result was of course doubtful. Edgar, by adroit prompting, got the youth through, and strange to say, the boy was grateful; still more grateful was he when Edgar's ready fist was ever at his service in the midshipman's berth; and Edgar's prompt aid helped him through duties which were to him arduous, though to Edgar's better knit frame they were matters of indifference. Edgar had but little money; what he had was at the service of his friend, Harold Pyne. About two months before Edgar left the ship on leave, Harold, whose strength had not received its expected corroboration from his sea life, left the service, the lawsuit having been decided in his mother's favour and his own.

Mrs. Pyne took her darling at once to the south for the benefit of a warmer climate. The friends had a tender parting, and Harold, whom the legal decision had endowed with five hundred a year of his own, entreated Edgar if he ever wanted money to apply to him without scruple. Edgar disliked pecuniary obligation, but the promise to which he was committed upset the virtue of self-dependence. He addressed his friend at Mentone with the salve to his conscience that he had, during the four years of their companionship, disbursed in hard cash more than the twenty pounds of which he begged the loan. He wrote his letter and despatched it, and a few hours afterwards the accident occurred which made his life a problem of even a few moments. Edgar told him of his trouble. He said how passionately he loved a poor village girl whom he was bound in honour to marry, for he had given his word, and a sailor's word could not be broken ; and he asked for a loan of twenty pounds to enable him to redeem his promise.

Harold was leaning back exhausted by a long fit of coughing when he read the letter.

"Private" was needlessly written at the top. He wrote a cheque for fifty pounds, and enclosed it with a few loving words and good wishes to his friend, begging him to apply without scruple for more when necessary.

"Mother," said Harold when the letter was despatched, "you have money enough for your own comfort, have you not?"

"Enough to enjoy all I require in life and to pile up a splendid heap for you and your children, Harold," said the poor woman, letting her frail thought dally with false surmise. She looked at him with a wan smile, and turned away that he might not observe what he had already seen, the trembling of her lip. Poor woman! she had so longed to have her rights recognized by law, to have money in abundance, after she had been pinched by poverty; and the wealth was come in abundance, and it could not seemingly add one hour to the life of the only being she cared for in the world.

"Then I may leave it as I like."

"Certainly, my dear son; but why think of making your will? Wait till you are well."

Harold replied not, except by a smile of tenderness. He would not vex his mother by expressing his conviction that his time must now be reckoned by days and not by weeks.

There was an English solicitor then at Mentone, come for a brief holiday to be spent in the company of a consumptive daughter, who was residing there with her husband for the sake of the climate.

Harold had an interview with this gentleman, and left by will his private property to his friend Edgar Petrel in consideration of the affection and good offices he had received for four years from the said Edgar Petrel. He appointed his mother trustee and executor.

To her he wrote a letter to be opened after his death, in which he begged her to put Edgar into possession of his property as soon as possible after his (Harold's) death, as he justly argued that if Edgar had been pinched in his previous circumstances he must be infinitely more so when he had a wife, and possibly a family dependent on him.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Life let us cherish
Whilst yet the taper glows,
And the fresh flowerets
Pluck ere they close."

WE left Mr. Petrel sleeping happily with two pillows under his head, for being afraid of headache he always liked to place it in a position slightly elevated. How pleasant it was to have a double bed, which allowed goosedown for two, for a single occupant; how delightful to remain in it as long as he liked on the following morning without Margaret's metallic voice, saying, "Jasper, will you not get up, or must I read prayers?"

"A good woman!" he meditated, as he took off his clothes and arranged them with scrupulous neatness on the top of the chest

of drawers. "Yes, a good woman! but how intensely disagreeable! 'In My Father's house are many mansions,'" he said, "we are told. If we both go to heaven I would consent to take the lowest place, could I be sure she would occupy the highest. I always was unselfish, and I could not grudge it to her, poor woman."

In this charitable state of feeling towards Margaret he dropped asleep, and slept late on the following morning. After a good breakfast he strolled to the hospital, smoking his cigar as he walked, and fully expected to find that Edgar had passed a good night and was better. On the contrary, he had passed a restless night, and the symptoms were less favourable, the attendant told him.

"Bless me! you don't say so! I'm his father—'tis very distressing. Cannot I see the doctor with whom I had an interview last night?"

"Very sorry, sir—quite impossible. Master is going round the wards with all the medical gentlemen."

"Very well, I will call again in the afternoon," and Mr. Petrel turned away.

"'Tis very distressing! poor Edgar! What a disturbing element to one's happiness is a son."

Much the same was the answer in the afternoon, and another day went by.

Few fathers care much for their grown-up sons, though they would probably be exceedingly indignant at being told this unsentimental truth. As a rule the young man's toes tread on the old man's heels. The father finds Tom and Jack waxing conceited. He does not wonder at it: his mother spoils the boy so completely. There is a cluster round the piano every evening, and the sisters play the accompaniment of a song, and the youth sings it with that exquisite timbre of voice which never survives two and twenty. The father had been wont to sing it himself, and asks pettishly how long that *blaring* is going to last as he cannot read his paper in peace. The house seemed large enough when the children were little and lived in the nursery, where the mother spent most of her time. Now the legs of the eldest boy are stuck out defiantly, and seem to reach half across the room, as he sprawls in the arm-chair which

used to be his mother's till he adopted it. She used to think that he looked most beautiful when, as a little boy in velvet knickerbockers, he would sit there with his golden hair waving on his shoulders, and a bit of paper twisted in his mouth to imitate papa's cigar who sat opposite to him. Now he lolls sullenly, real cigars being forbidden. He smokes however out of doors, and his clothes reveal the sickening odour of stale tobacco, which seems to be as distasteful even to the smoker as is the memory of other by-gone excesses. The smoker inflicts his "filthy bargain," too, on his unoffending womankind, as is the case with other sinners.

To those parents who are for letting boys have their fling, I would only wish that their quiver may be full of them, and that they may all smoke and drink fermented liquors. I think half-a dozen such might, without any greater vice than folly, contrive to bring their parents to the grave, and convince them that children have no right to indulgences till they have earned them.

Mr. Petrel did not know what disobedient thoughts and intentions had occupied the

poor brain which was lying now so shaken and shattered. Had he done so, he would, no doubt (being a clergyman and pious), have considered the fall from the mast-head as "Providential," and intended to mark the disapprobation of Heaven of a marriage which was so dreadfully incongruous and degrading.

Mr. Petrel's anxieties did not awaken him at cock-crowing. He slept long, and ate heartily when he descended to breakfast. He was in no hurry to go to the hospital again. It was useless to rush towards ill news—it would come fast enough. He strolled about and looked at the public buildings, and seeing that there was a reading-room and billiard-room thereunto attached, he entered, and finding only the marker, he remembered that before he had been buried in the country he had been capable of handling his cue with dexterity, so he had a game quietly and lost, paying for the use of the tables and a small bet lost to the marker. Then he thought with a sigh that he must go to the hospital. It was very unpleasant; when playing billiards he could forget the terrible vision of Edgar as he last saw him, but it became more distinct

with every pace he made towards the building where his son lay in his helpless suffering.

When he reached it and inquired for his son, he was told that he had passed a favourable night, and was going on as well as could be hoped under the circumstances ; the doctor did not wish Mr. Petrel to see him, no good purpose could thereby be obtained, and there was always a chance of disturbing the patient, so Mr. Petrel went to the hotel to order dinner, and found a letter in the scrawling hand of his eldest daughter. He was in no hurry to read it, and fortified himself first with a glass of strong ale. Had his feelings been very acute the stimulant might have been needed. The letter ran thus :

“ DEAR PAPA,

“ Please to come home directly. Doctor Chester says you had better come, for poor mamma is very ill indeed.”

“ Bless my soul ! Margaret !” cried the husband, and he thought with compunction that it was only last night he had considered poor Margaret such a nuisance.

He must go at once—that is, he would have his dinner first. It would be better to speak to the doctor he had seen at the hospital, and say how painfully he was distracted between two duties, to remain near his son and to visit his home, where so sad a welcome awaited him. The doctor was filled with pity; he assured him that he would write fully about his son, who would receive all the care and tenderness that skill and humanity could supply, and with a kind hand-shake they parted.

It was out of nature that Mr. Petrel should not be disturbed at the announcement of Margaret's peril. He tried not to think of her, nor of Edgar. He smoked incessantly to deaden his imaginations of evil; his sinister anticipations as to what might await him. He pitied himself silently; was ever a devoted husband and father so-torn? He wept over his own outraged sensibilities. "It was intolerable that Edgar and Margaret should do these kind of things!" was the conviction that passed through his mind. These thoughts, mixed with abject terror of what he might be called upon to face, pursued him to the ter-

mination of the railway station. There he took a fly. The flyman knew Mr. Petrel, but that gentleman dared not ask if the man had heard anything from the Vicarage, because he fancied that there was a look of concern in the man's face. As he drew near the house he heard the sound of wheels, and saw the doctor's gig disappearing in the opposite road. He paid the driver in silence, and went to the back door, not to knock.

As he entered the kitchen the old woman who had nursed Margaret when a child, was rocking backward and forward with her apron over her face, the cook was making a piece of toast with one hand, and wiping her eyes with the back of the other. Mr. Petrel passed unnoticed to the door of his bedroom; he paused a moment, and then nerved himself to turn the handle, and drew back from the unutterable horror of the sight. He sought refuge in his dressing-room. A heap of flannel lay before the fire. He advanced to kick it away, and heard the corncrake cry of a newly-born child, whose lungs have not yet attained their full action.

He never liked touching infants; even those he was compelled to take in his arms at the font made him feel gruesome, he used to say; but as he stooped down and threw back the flannel from the face of the frail atom of humanity on the ground, the heart so self-incased was melted, and he covered it over gently, and sat down in his easy chair and wept.

It was a dreadful home to which Mr. Petrel had returned. He felt that Margaret had behaved in a very thoughtless and unfeeling manner, in dying as she did, and leaving him all the toil and burden of a large family.

This may seem incredible, but it was the fact: any little remnant of tenderness which had survived the wear and tear of married life, was utterly crushed and eradicated by the involuntary departure from it.

"She never had any consideration for me," said the bereaved father. "I suppose I must see after these troublesome matters myself," as he bestirred himself to send for the village carpenter.

He was about to send for the mercer who furnished funerals also, but thought it best

first to look over poor Margaret's papers, and found, as he expected, a testamentary document forbidding the exhibition of scarves and hatbands.

It seemed rather hard on the few officials, for where could mourners for poor Margaret be found to deprive them of their hatbands and scarves? Mr. Petrel remembered how Margaret had rejoiced over his scarves when he had flung them to her with the grand air of making a handsome present, when he came from the funeral of a well-to-do parishioner, and how she treasured them till she had enough to make up a gown for herself, defying the difference of colour and texture in the silks—for a silk dress of any kind was better than a gingham one; how when the dress had lasted for many Sundays, and had begun to split in the folds, it had been cut down for a best frock for the eldest girl. However, he was not going to dispute poor Margaret's last wishes, mean as they were. She always had a mean spirit, poor woman! Peace to her manes.

CHAPTER XVII.

“Keen and cold is the blast loudly whistling around,
And cold are the lips that once smiled upon me,
And unyielding, alas ! as the hard frozen ground,
The arms once so ready my shelter to be.”

PLEASANCE nursed her grandmother to the conclusion of her life, and then the parish buried her. Pleasance was the only mourner. It was sad to see the struggle between poverty and the wish to appear in decent mourning for the old woman. Her friend, the cottager's wife, borrowed a frock and a black bonnet from one of the mine girls, who had recently lost her father. It was to be returned on the evening of the funeral, and Pleasance was very grateful for the loan.

She walked after the carelessly put together coffin, and listened with awe to the holy words

of the burial service. Then she wandered in her thoughts at the words, "With what bodies shall they be raised?" She could not fancy her grandmother made into an angel by any flight of fancy. Her memory presented the image of an old bent figure, with a face which was a network of wrinkles. The dirty white mob-cap, the blue checked neckerchief pinned over her flat chest, and the tattered apron and short-sleeved gown, showing arms as thin and dark as those of a mummy.

"If grandmother is to be made into an angel, I shall never know her, if I have the chance to go to heaven," Pleasance speculated. "I should be bad off," said she to herself, "for I don't remember father nor mother, and I should not know any one there, unless—" and here she burst into a flood of tears—"unless Edgar is there."

The tears were put down to her sense of her grandmother's loss, and one of the bystanders timidly whispered to her not to take on so, for she was an old woman, "she that's gone," and "had lived her time."

Constantly thus in human intercourse we find kindly efforts to bind up an unwounded limb,

whilst the hidden puncture bleeds and rankles unsuspected by the would-be consoler.

It was all over now. Pleasance went to her friend's house, and took off the borrowed frock and bonnet. The husband came in tired and surly, and Pleasance, feeling she had no place there, went back to her desolate home on the cliff. The old woman had been buried in the afternoon, and it was getting dusk before Pleasance reached the hut. The poor girl flung herself on the deserted bed, and wept hopelessly. The old woman had often been harsh, but then she had often been tender, and the harshness was forgotten in the first bursts of grief.

Grief is very grievous to the poor. Pleasance felt it to be so. She had no companion to speak a kindly word, or to give her a cup of hot tea. There were the remains of a little cold gruel by the side of the fireless grate, which she had made for her grandmother, and was part of the last sustenance she had been able to swallow. She could not fancy it, and remained with her head resting on her crossed arms, over the tangles of her golden hair.

She had forgotten her persecutor in the

terrible watching by her grandmother's death-bed ; but in shaping out her future, she could not but remember him as a creature to be avoided with terror and disgust. True, she might have food and delicate drinks and rich clothes, if she went and offered to live with him ; but the promise which Edgar had extorted was needless ; no other should ever touch the lips he had hallowed by his caress.

She thought she would go away with the morning light, and walk to the house of the kind landlady who had promised to get her a place. It was not much of a hope or intention, but it was better than nothing, and she became impatient for morning light that she might carry it out.

"Now *she* is gone," the poor girl thought, "he may be coming up here after me." She shuddered, and clutched the rough post at the bed's-head at the thought, and at a sound which seemed to come from the bottom of the cliff as of a human voice in distress or anxiety. The roar of the waves, with the retreating of their waters, made a sighing sound as if of a human being in continuous suffering. The shuddering wind had arisen, and catching the

angle of the fragile hut, made it quiver and crack by its violence.

She felt self-pity for the dark loneliness which surrounded her. The cry she had heard was so like the petulant and plaintive sounds uttered by her grandmother in her utmost extremity, that the girl shivered at the thought that the departed spirit was out in the night-blast, and there reproached her grandchild with not having made her old days prosperous and happy. Where was the spirit of her grandmother if not there? Where were the souls of the dead to await the day of judgment—in their confined sleep? Pleasance knew not, but the speculation filled her with unutterable terror. The sound came again, but fainter. She shrank lower on the narrow bed; for though less piercing, it seemed nearer and more complaining. She should go mad, she thought, if this continued. She would get up and feel her way in the dark to neighbour Sibly's cottage. If she lay outside that cottage door all night, she should still feel that she was near to help. She knew that her friend had but one room, which she occupied with her husband, an ill-tempered

man, who grudged that his wife should do a kindness to any but himself.

"Oh, grandmother!" she cried, apostrophizing the haunting spirit, "don't frighten me! I *could* not do it. Oh! have mercy!" She stopped still for a moment, listening for an answer, the cold moisture bursting from her brow in her mental terror. Then she sat up and began to put on her shoes, preparatory to crawling down to Mrs. Sibly's cottage. As she lifted her head from this occupation, she felt rather than distinguished that a dark figure was near her in the doorway. She fancied she detected the short breathing of some creature who had ascended the pathway of the cliff to get to her.

Her terror now took another form. It was that man—that Pike—who had pursued her now when no longer protected by the fearful presence of the dying woman. She felt that she was trapped—she could not pass him. With a long wail of terror and despair she retreated a step or two—alas! the small room did not admit of more—when a voice made her heart bound, and then stop, and then rush onward again with hurried throbs.

"Pleasance!" it cried; "my Pleasance!"

"Oh! oh!" she said, scarcely able to breathe.

"Pleasance, where are you?" Putting out his hand, he seemed to know intuitively where she had crouched.

She rising, they clung together in such an embrace as those who have loved and felt separation to be death give when reunited. There were tears and sobs from Pleasance, but they were those of happiness too big for words. In the trust of her childish age and feminine feelings, Edgar was there, and she was satisfied. They might have to face a prison or death together, but she held him tight in her arms.

"Oh! I am too—too happy!" she whispered, as she guided him to the side of the bed, on which they seated themselves with clasped hands for a space. The wind roared and shuddered through the ruinous hut, but bliss unmingled was in the heart of the poor girl. She laughed a low laugh, and stroked his face with her small brown hand. "Oh, my love, your cheeks are not so round as they were; but why did you stay away so long?"

Ah ! I was sure you could not help it ! Edgar, I have kept my word ; I was cruel to her that's gone, but true to you. We were hungry and thirsty, but I kept my word. They used me cruel. He hit me with a stone ; they said I stole, and put me in prison. I thought you would never come back, but I knew you would keep your word if you were alive. Edgar, I thought you were dead," and she tightened her clasp of loving arms round his neck, as if so held death could never reach him.

He kissed her tenderly, but his spirits had none of the elation which made hers effervesce with delight. Each had much to tell the other in that short autumn night. Edgar was a saddened man. The promise to which he had committed himself he must do his best to keep ; but he was a gentleman, and had known, besides, the charm of an intellectual and cultivated mind in his mother, and he felt that with all her beauty Pleasance would have been a daughter-in-law who would, by her want of education, have reminded her incessantly of the folly which had made such a penance necessary as that which Edgar had inflicted on himself and his family.

Her artless narration of bygone troubles, whilst it made him clench his fist with impotent rage against Pleasance's persecutor, told him more plainly than ever the penalty he must endure in marrying a girl who had been convicted of theft in a court of justice ; therefore Edgar bestowed more happiness than he felt. Indeed, the only pleasure he experienced was in the conviction that he was about to confer respectability on a young creature who loved him so tenderly and truly.

With hand clasped in hand they awaited the morning light. When it came, Pleasance observed her lover's shrunk frame and pale cheek, and was told the cause.

"Why is this crape round your hat, Edgar?"

"My mother is dead," said the youth, in a very low voice. It was a grief too sacred for the peasant girl to partake, and again Edgar felt with a sigh the result of his lightly-pledged word. "Pleasance! are you ready to marry me to-morrow? I shall have to go to sea immediately to join my ship. I have been absent too long."

"To-morrow!" said Pleasance; "married

and go away! Oh! not go away! 'Tis dreadful when thou'rt gone!"

"Perhaps it will not be so bad again. We will be married to-morrow; we will go away in my boat. I moored it in the little cove last night. I have spoken to the clerk. The clergyman will be ready to marry us at St. Mary's Church."

Pleasance rested her brow against Edgar's shoulder, and began to cry.

"What means this?—Why do you cry? Don't you like to marry me?"

She caught hold of his arm with both her hands, and squeezed it very tightly.

"I don't think I *can* be married," she said, "because I have no frock and no new bonnet, and all my clothes"—here she grew inarticulate with sobs—"are—so—v—ery old and ragged."

However nonsensical the objection would appear to one of the male sex, probably every girl would have sympathized with the poor little would-be bride. How many young ladies consider the satin dress and the bridal veil as the most important parts of the ceremony.

There was something in the childishness of his future wife which charmed the affection and increased the important sense of responsibility in the youth of eighteen, who was about to take on himself such a grave charge.

"Do not disturb yourself, my dear," he said; "I have thought of all that. My lieutenant, a very good fellow, whom I know very well, lives at Plymouth with his mother when he is home on leave. She is a most kind lady, and I told her about you, and that I wanted a new plain white frock, and hat, and shoes; in fact, a whole new rig-out. I gave her the money to pay for it, and I have told the tradespeople to send the things to a public-house where I am not known. You will dress there, and then we can go to church and get married. My friend, Mr. Heathdale, will give you away, and Mrs. Heathdale will give us some breakfast afterwards."

"Oh!" cried Pleasance twice, the first time at the thought of the new "rig-out," as her sailor lover called it; the second time the expression was one of awe, for she was afraid of "the most kind lady," and felt sure she

should not behave properly before eyes which she thought would certainly be critical and scrutinizing. However, she could make no objection. A slave of the most despotic master could not be more obedient than Pleasance in thought, word, and deed.

Edgar paused, thinking how he could form the expression of his next wishes without humiliating his young companion. Whilst he mused Pleasance spoke timidly—

“Where am I to go when you are away, and what am I to do?”

“My child, I will leave you all the money I can spare. Mrs. Heathdale will get you some cheap lodging, and see after you, I have no doubt; and Pleasance, do you know what is one of the most anxious moments of a sailor’s life? It is when the boat is coming off to the ship with letters. How I have seen fellows’ eyes sparkle when the bag was opened and a letter from some one at home was given to them, and how downcast those were when the last handful were sorted and there was none for them. Oh! no one can tell what a sick feeling of neglect and desertion comes over a lad when his friends don’t write. It cuts him

off from those of his messmates who have theirs, for he cannot sympathize with their joys, nor they with his disappointment. How glad I should be to have a letter from my Pleasance."

The head of poor Pleasance again drooped on her lover's shoulder. "I cannot read or write, Édgar," she whispered, in a tone of despair; and then with a sob, "I wish I could be a lady and a proper kind of wife for you."

"Do not vex yourself, my darling; I never loved any one but you; I never could love any one better. How old are you?"

"Fifteen last Lady-Day," answered the girl. "By this token, that a storm carried off part of the roof of the church, and a wreck came on shore, and father was killed down in the shaft the day I was born."

"By Jove! you came in foul weather."

"A chick of Mother Carey's, it would seem, eh?" inquired the girl.

"I said you were my dear little chick," said the youth, kissing her. "But you are so young, and your hands are so small, that you will soon learn to read and write; those

delicate fingers will soon form the letters properly. You will have to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic."

"Oh, no, never! I never can do that."

"Why not?"

"I do not mind reading and writing, but the other thing with a long name I never shall be able to manage."

"Shall you not? We will see. Now I kiss you three times on one cheek, and four times on your mouth. How many did that make altogether?"

"Seven," whispered the girl, disengaging herself to breathe more freely.

"That is arithmetic," said the youth, triumphantly.

"Dear me!" said Pleasance, "I should not have thought it."

"But no one must teach you that way but myself, my child."

"Oh, no, of course not," replied the girl.

"And you will try to learn a great deal, so as to be a nice clever little wife by the time I return from sea?"

"Are you going a great way off?"

"No, only to the Mediterranean; the finest

station in the world. Dearest Pleasance, you will pray for me, and I will pray for you!" and Edgar tried to think he should not be so badly off in having such a charming little girl at home to watch for his return and pray for his welfare. It was terrible to think that he could not produce her to his family. There was an agonizing feeling in his heart of relief that his mother could never now be shamed by what he had done. If from a higher sphere she looked down on him, she would regard the fault with superior pity, and the sacrifice it had entailed with approbation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Away flew the light barque o'er the silvery bay."

DAY dawned on their young faces as they sat in the hut, tinting the fleecy clouds in the blue sky with rosy light, and illuminating the moulded countenance of the girl-love looking into her boy's face with eager eyes, and lips scarcely parted, and the grave sadness of the dark orbs of the youth, whose face wore the pallor of recent suffering, but which smiled faintly in that morning radiance. A soft breeze came from the sea, and they looked out on its sparkling, dancing waters, which seemed in accordance with the gladness which bounded in the heart of the girl.

Luckily for her peace of mind, she had no idea of the sacrifice Edgar was making in

marrying her ; to have done so, she must have understood the laws of the society to which he belonged, and to have understood them she must have had education and experience, so she enjoyed the present hour, and gazed at her lover's handsome face and at the glowing sky, and then looked down with a sigh to see how brown her hand seemed by the side of his.

"Will my hands grow white when I am a lady ? I mean, when you have made me one by marrying me ?" she asked.

"I dare say they will, when you do not expose them to the sun, my child ; but I love you as you are, and I would not alter you one hair's breadth any way."

She looked pleased, and smiled, and thought she should look prettier, and he would love her better, when she was dressed in better clothes.

"The tide will suit now, Pleasance. I suppose you have nothing to take with you ?" he said, looking round the poor hut.

"Not much," said the girl, as she arose and tied a few articles of clothing in a handkerchief. "Poor grannie !" she said, sadly.

"But oh! I am so glad to go. I believe I should have jumped into the sea if that man had come. He will not find me now."

"Let us go—quick, dear."

And she followed Edgar down the precipitous path to where the little boat was safely moored, and Pleasance had the intense happiness in a few moments of looking up and around her, and feeling as if they had the sea and sky all to themselves.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ With troubled joy, the wife
Felt a new era in her changeful life.”

THEY reached Plymouth safely, and found at the sign of the Cutter the new clothes ordered for Pleasance; and after they had eaten some breakfast, which, as far as the girl was concerned, was the first solid meal she had had for two days, she went to a bedroom to get rid of her soiled and tattered garments, and don those provided for her by Edgar.

The small, dim, green-tinted glass which represented the change in her appearance, could not do justice to more than the outline—a simple dress of white material and a pretty bonnet with a bunch of May, which Mrs. Heathdale thought would suit the youth of the bride, had made a beautiful girl in-

finitely more beautiful. As she found her way to the room where she had left Edgar, and opened the door, he fairly started at the vision that flashed on him, with an instantaneous doubt if it were she. She stood in the doorway, blushing shyly, and when Edgar sprang up and clasped his arms round her, she disengaged herself gently, pointing to the fragile materials which formed the decoration of her head.

Edgar turned her round and admired the rich braids of yellow hair, bound round the back of her head in bright profusion.

"What would some ladies give for such tresses?" said the youth; "aye! and such a face to be adorned by them."

"We girls always took pains with our hair, in the mine, you see, because we had no nice clothes to be proud of; but Lizzie Trejean's was nice, because 'twas so black."

Thus said Pleasance, in the hope of a contradiction, which she got, of course, for Edgar said no hair could be so beautiful as golden.

They reached the church, and found Mr.

Heathdale, with a sailor's punctuality, had already arrived.

Edgar, as a rule, was equally punctual, but on this occasion he had his lovely bride to delay him.

They entered, and Pleasance looked with awe at the sacred building. She had never been inside any but a dissenting chapel, except when she had been christened. As she gazed on the monuments, of which the sculptured emblems of skull and cross-bones most impressed her imagination, for she could not read the inscriptions,—Edgar's friend, with a sailor's superstition, in a whisper, entreated Edgar to take the band of black crape from his arm, which he wore in mourning for his mother.

"My dear fellow, oblige me! you know sailors now-a-days ought to be above such absurd fancies, but it seems such a dare-devil sort of thing, you know—flying in the face of Providence, as if you did not care what was going to happen."

"I am in mourning for my mother, Ned. I cannot cease to mourn for her, because I am going to be married. I cannot—I will not take off the crape."

"A wilful man must have his own way, then, but I fear you will repent it."

"The marriage or the crape?" said Edgar, with a faint smile. "Never mind; what must be, must be."

When the signing had to be done, Edgar wrote the signature of Pleasance—"Pleasance Fern, her mark X." His friend looked another way.

The ceremony was completed, and the trio went to the small house overlooking the sea which was Mrs. Heathdale's home.

Her husband, who had been a captain in the navy, had invested his little savings in this residence, that his wife and son might always have a refuge.

The house stood back a little from the gay esplanade, but it was, though small, too neat to be any eyesore amongst other more pretentious buildings. The long strip of a garden was an advantage not possessed by the neighbouring residences. This garden was the favourite recreation of the widow and of her son, when ill-fortune compelled him to remain on shore.

All was trim and *taut* in the garden, and

Edward Heathdale might be seen at six o'clock every morning, in his slippers, dragging the heavy roller up and down the gravel path, on which occasions he wore neither boots nor shoes, lest he should leave the marks of their indentations in the moist soil, and thus spoil the appearance of his work.

The well-dressed crowds that passed up and down the causeway frequently stopped with exclamations of sudden surprise at the glow and the glory of the flowers, so unusual in air loaded with saline particles; and the lieutenant and his mother, sitting perdue behind the Venetian blinds, used to revel in the admiration won by their handiwork.

Thirty pounds a year and her pension were all Mrs. Heathdale's property, but her son had his pay, and of this he gave her a liberal portion, thus raising her income to comfort. Hitherto they had been able to get along, for Mrs. Heathdale had laid by a small sum, which she encroached on when Ned was at home, and consequently on half-pay.

They might let lodgings if they were ever very much pinched, but Edward did not like the degradation to his mother, and she did

not like that her precious furniture should be subjected to the careless handling of strangers, who neither knew nor cared how costly every separate article became when its purchase had been won by integers of accumulated thrift.

Mrs. Heathdale put on her best grey silk, and a newly done up, old-fashioned lace collar, to receive her son's guests. She wore no cap, for her dark hair was still abundant, and was worn plainly turned back over her ears, and twisted into a braid at the back of her head. A hair out of its place would have been a great disturbance to her son's equanimity; and so it was kept with scrupulous neatness.

The deceased captain had broken his wife well into the requirements of a tar on shore.

Mrs. Heathdale had learnt from her son that the bride was of low degree. She knew that the husband is said to elevate the wife to his own station theoretically. She fancied that the girl would be forward and self-asserting and vulgar, and was ready to repress her, and compel respect by the loftiness of her manner; but when Pleasance,

nervous and trembling, was led into the room by Lieutenant Heathdale, the widow's heart melted towards the pleading eyes and timid glances of the newly-made wife.

"The poor young fellow," the lieutenant had said, "has taken a little craft in tow ; I fear he can hardly carry sail enough for himself. It is not every man who is so lucky as to have a mother and a home like mine."

Mrs. Heathdale smiled at the implied compliment, and congratulated herself silently that she had been able to make Edward happy, and had obviated the necessity of a little craft being "taken in tow."

She felt, however, a consolation at the thought that Edward was going to sea at once, and would not long remain within scope of the temptation which might arise from seeing his friend with so well-built a little bark always in tow under his very eyes, which might set the gallant lieutenant on the look out to find a similar one.

The widow's eyes fell with a troubled look in them on the black crape on Edgar's arm. She said nothing, but her son knew of what she was thinking. She looked at the poor

youth with pity, and having on the chimney-piece, a letter with a black border which she thought had come from his father, she placed it hurriedly behind some letters which awaited her son, both having been forwarded by the young man's agent.

Pleasance comported herself without any glaring breach of etiquette. She found the tea very hot and had been about to pour it into the saucer; but she saw the widow quietly sipping hers from the cup, so she waited. It was well that Pleasance had eaten a good breakfast before. She was too nervous to enjoy that which was placed before her so liberally. No savage, ignorant of civilization, could be more wonder-stricken than this untaught Cornish girl at all she saw on the table of her hostess.

The delicate white table-cloth, the brightly kept silver, the cruet-stand with its glittering regiment of bottles with old-fashioned chased tops, sparkled in the sunshine; the eggs looking more tempting for purple glass cups which held each invitingly with silver spoons by the sides, all seemed to bespeak unbounded wealth and refinement,

of which Pleasance had never before had an idea.

"To see thee catch
Knowledge of objects—wonders get to thee,"

said the young lover and husband to himself, for he was well read in Byron, who goes to the hearts of all sailors by the masterly description given of a frigate in "*Childe Harold*."

Still he thought he had rather darling Pleasance had been accustomed to such articles of the breakfast table as were in use in the middle classes of society, and if she would not utter her "yes and no," with such a Cornish twang, what a blessing it would be. He wondered if that quiet lady-like woman Mrs. Heathdale observed it.

The breakfast could not last for ever, though the host and hostess prolonged it, for the tender-hearted widow thought with a pang of the deep black-edged border of the letter she must deliver to the young midshipman. She did it in a hurry at length—thinking that a letter from a house of mourning must be a sad one, and left the

room calling the son out with her. If the letter contained bad news, she thought Edgar would prefer receiving it alone.

The son and his mother went out into the little garden together,—

“What do you think of the young wife?” asked the former.

“It is not easy to judge, on so short an acquaintance,” said Mrs. Heathdale.

“I was thinking,” said Ned, “that she wants a home, and if you ever did let lodgings, you might let the poor thing lodge with you, for a small weekly sum which would be an immense boon to her, and to Petrel, and no loss to you.”

“Umph!” said the widow doubtfully.

“Don’t you like her?” cried Ned impulsively.

“It is not that, my dear, but the furniture you know, the furniture; I saw her drop greasy crumbs on the carpet as she was eating her hot roll, and she put the teaspoon fresh from stirring the tea down right on the clean table-cloth.”

“Ah! she would not do that if you taught her,” observed the son.

"Teaching is wearisome work," observed the mother, "when there is no foundation to work on ; some folks are naturally tidy, some untidy. I went for the character of a parlour-maid once, and I naturally asked why her mistress wished to part with her. The lady replied that she had not much fault to find, but that when Sally laid the cloth she did not put the knives and forks in a parallel line. It was quite enough ; that single circumstance represented a thousand others of the same nature."

Edward said no more, and the gentle woman, seeing a shade on his face, said —

"My son, it shall be so if you wish it."

"No, my dearest mother, not if you have the slightest objection ; whom have I on earth but you, and for whose happiness should I be desirous, if not for that of the creature who is dearest to me on earth ?"

The mother and son turned at the end of the straight path and saw Edgar coming towards them. His face was flushed and excited.

"Will you excuse me, madam," he said,

"if I take your son away for half an hour's conversation. I hope you will not find Pleasance in your way. Let her sit down and give her a book," said the husband, forgetting what a mockery such a compliment would be.

The widow smiled and addressed herself to the bride, "Are you fond of flowers?"

"Oh yes! but I do not know their names much. You see, ma'am, they don't grow well near the sea, only thyme and sea-pink and such like, at least, not in my parts. These are quite beauties," she continued, stooping down with real enthusiasm to bury her face in a cluster of roses.

"My son grafted those," said the widow with great pride; "he always keeps the garden well when he is on shore."

"How dull, how dreadful it must be when he goes away," exclaimed Pleasance with a sudden foretaste of the future.

"Yes, my dear!" said the widow sadly. "It is dreadful; I hope you may never know all the misery a sailor's wife may have to endure."

The widow's eyes were full of tears, and

Pleasance was respectfully silent. Then, forgetting her own retrospections, Mrs. Heathdale asked—

“I hope Mr. Petrel had no bad news, I mean, nothing new in that letter.”

“Yes; I believe it was bad news; I do not know what it was—some friend he was fond of is dead, I believe. He wanted to speak to the gentleman, your son I mean, as soon as he read it. He did not say much, only ‘I want Heathdale,’ and then we came to look for you.”

“What are you going to do whilst Mr. Petrel is away? Have you any relations or acquaintance with whom you intend to live?”

Pleasance turned a scared and piteous face at her interrogator.

“Grannie is dead,” she said, “I never had but Grannie.”

“Should you like to live with me if we could arrange terms?” asked Mrs. Heathdale, willing to prove to Edward how desirous she was to meet his wishes.

“Oh! I should like it so much, if you would not mind, ma’am; only I am so

stupid. I don't think you would like it."

"We will see," replied the widow. "She seems an humble-minded little girl; I do not think I should much object to having her as a companion—no one need know that I have a lodger."

When Edgar had taken his friend away he put into his hand a letter from the lawyer of his old shipmate, informing him of his friend's death, and of the property he had left to him. He added that it was the wish of the kind lady who was the mother of the deceased, that Mr. Petrel should be put at once into possession of the money which was funded, and produced an income of rather over five hundred a-year.

"What a rich fellow you are, Petrel!" cried the poor lieutenant, with a momentary sensation of envy; but this was but transitory; and, as he shook the hand of the youth and congratulated him, the friends began to talk over the relief which this would give to the young couple. "You must go at once and make your will, Petrel, in favour of your wife.

Otherwise she will get only a portion of it, in case of your death."

"Is it so? indeed, where shall I go—what lawyer?"

"Oh! I don't know; suppose you go to Mr. Tyrrel, I have heard him well spoken of."

The two young men went at once. The ship was to sail in two days' time, so despatch was imperative.

Edgar left all he possessed to his wife, and any children she might bear to him, she enjoying the whole of the income till she died, or contracted a second marriage, in which case the money was to pass at once to his children.

"I am not afraid of my wife's marrying again," he had said to the lawyer, who suggested the chance about the second nuptials.

"It is a natural delusion in a young man," said the lawyer grinning; "but it is best to be on the safe side," and thus it was settled.

"Who is to be named trustee and executor for Mrs. Petrel?" asked the lawyer.

Edgar looked at his friend.

"Pardon me, sir, but never take an army or navy man; it gives such an infinity of trouble, when they are beyond seas."

Ultimately, Mr. Heathdale promised to ask an old half-pay commander if he would consent to act as trustee in case of Edgar's death, and as he made no difficulty, the matter was satisfactorily arranged.

CHAPTER XX.

“Believe not what the landsmen say,
Who’d tempt with doubts thy constant mind,
They tell thee seamen when away
In every clime a mistress find ;
But yet believe them when they tell thee so,
For thou art present wheresoe’er I go.”

“My girl is so young,” said Edgar sadly.

“’Tis terrible to leave her unprotected.”

“So young and so very lovely,” responded his friend. “My mother and I are poor, but I think she might arrange to keep Mrs. Petrel in your absence, if you like the idea.”

“My dear fellow, every wish of my heart would be fulfilled by such an acquiescence on the part of Mrs. Heathdale—I am sure Pleasance would be most grateful—you

see I am rich now, and I need not be niggardly as to terms."

When they returned to the house, Edgar took his wife out for a walk to tell her the good news of his wealth, and the lieutenant sought his mother to see if she would consent to receive the young wife in his friend's absence.

Looking up sweetly as soon as they were alone into her son's face, she said, with the graceful yielding which had endeared her so much to the deceased Heathdale, and which always melted the heart of the lieutenant,—

"Edward, the poor young thing is nice enough; I will keep her to live with me, if her husband will pay for her board and washing, we need not count the lodging, as I should not take any one else. It would not be like letting lodgings you see, my dear," added the widow, smoothing down the folds of her old grey silk, "more like keeping house together; I would not ask them to pay much, only just what she cost."

Her son kissed her, and assured her that Mr. Petrel had come into five hundred

a-year, and was willing to pay liberally for his wife's board and lodging.

Alas for the infirmities of human nature ! Mrs. Heathdale was a kind hearted woman, and willing to do what was not quite agreeable to herself, to be friendly to the poor young thing, and to do what pleased her son ; but it cannot be denied but that the knowledge that Mrs. Petrel would be wealthy materially increased her disposition to be kind to her ; and then came the discussion as to the sum to be charged. "She would have to pay quite fifty pounds a-year for her lodging, if she did not live with me ; then there is her board, forty—it used to be thirty, before things were so dear : I shall have to give a pound more to Sarah, I suppose ; then there is her washing—those young things are so extravagant in frills and flounces !"

"You had better let her pay for her washing, herself ; suppose we say one hundred a-year ?"

"That will be ample, my dear, if Mr. Petrel approves."

In the meantime, Edgar and Pleasance

strolled along the High Street at Devonport : he enjoying the lingering looks of admiration cast on the beautiful girl on his arm, who might, from her delicate fairness and her slender grace, have been the daughter of a duke instead of a Cornish miner ; she, utterly unobservant of the attention she excited, was wrapt in astonishment at the contents of the shop windows. " Oh ! oh ! " she cried, in a low voice of awe when she came to a jeweller's shop. There she made a stand, unable, seemingly, to tear herself away.

When they had first started, Edgar had informed her of his accession of fortune, and was both disturbed and wonder-stricken at the indifference with which she had received it. " She must be deficient in intellect," was his melancholy conviction ; not that Pleasance was deficient in intelligence : she would have understood when she worked at the mine if her wages had been doubled or trebled ; but being quite satisfied with the idea she had formed on the basis of the little gold crown on Edgar's cap that he must, as the queen's officer, possess a mine of wealth, any addi-

tion to it seemed to her to be a matter of indifference.

When they stood outside the shop, however, Edgar explained to her that he could now give her a trifling ornament, which but for his legacy he would have found it impossible to do. Would she prefer a brooch or a locket? She looked at him in joyful amazement, and pointed her small first finger towards the gayest brooch on the velvet cushion. Luckily this one, glittering with blue enamel, was not by any means the most expensive, and Pleasance had it fastened by her husband into the front of her dress, with a face flushed to deeper beauty by shyness and pleasure.

As she proceeded along the pavement she thought it quite natural that folks should look at her with that beautiful brooch stuck on her breast, and she wore a prouder look, and walked with a more elastic step.

"I love you very much, dear," she said gracefully, as they came out of the shop after Edgar had paid the bill and taken the receipt.

"Will you always love me, and no one else?" asked the young sailor, whom the past

of the life of Pleasance had made doubtful of the future.

"I will never love any other man as long as I live," said the young girl, solemnly. "May God be my witness."

It was a grave promise, made in all the bustle of jostling passengers, whirling carriages, and all the distracting sights and sounds of busy life; but the young sailor drank in every word, and believed in his young bride with a feeling of intense comfort. "She will be faithful, if there be faith in human nature," he thought.

Pleasance asked for no return pledge; she thought it a matter of course that Edgar should be true to her. Was he not her husband?

They went home to the house on the cliff, where the widow had prepared dinner for them. Edgar and Edward were to sail on the morrow to join the "Isis" in the Mediterranean. This was a sound of despair to the young wife; she remembered all that had happened when Edgar left her before, and was full of fearful auguries for the future. That night, when they retired to the spare

bedroom kept for guests who rarely came, Pleasance hung round the neck of her husband and wept bitterly.

"Why do you cry, dear?" he asked.

"Oh, Edgar! when you went away before they flung stones at me and put me in prison, my feet were bleeding, and I was ill because I was starved and badly used, and when you go away she may turn me out, and I shall be as bad off as before."

"Little goose!" murmured Edgar, in the intervals of his caresses; "Mrs. Heathdale is a good woman, and would not deal unkindly with you had you no money. As it is, she will be paid for keeping you with her; and oh, Pleasance! if you would but learn to read and write I should be so very glad. I will give her some more money to teach you if you will learn."

"Yes; to be sure I will learn. You will not laugh at my poor letters, dear?"

"Laugh at them! they will be the dearest pleasure I can have. I shall be on the lookout for them, and when I get one written by this pretty little hand, how proud I shall be of my Pleasance!"

She soon slept with her head on the breast of her boy, whilst he was sleepless for some time, distracted by troubled thoughts. Had his mother lived, he meant to have avowed his marriage—at least, he quite believed now that he should have done so; but how could he confess to his father that a few days after the loss of his mother he had married without his knowledge or consent? His father had more than once murmured over the expenses to which he had been put by Edgar's outfit for the navy—the amount having been one-hundred and twenty pounds. It had grated on his spirit of independence, and he had often thought, "Alas! were we in the old-fashioned days of prize-money from engagements between single ships, I might manage to obtain some, and pay him off; as it is, I can do nothing but pray for promotion. Now," he calculated, "one hundred for the board and lodging of Pleasance, twenty more if Mrs. Heathdale will teach her to read and write and cypher, thirty for her clothes and washing, will leave three hundred and fifty pounds. Of this I should like to send two hundred to my father to repay my outfit, and

other expenses. What I do not draw myself had better be funded in my name for my family when I have one," he said, with all the dignity of future paternity.

Before he went on board on the following evening he called on the old commander, begging him to receive the money for him, and to deduct two hundred from the first year's income, and send it to the Reverend Jasper Petrel, Birchwood Rectory, —shire, paying the rest to his wife, with the exception of one hundred and fifty pounds a year, which was to be paid to Mrs. Heathdale for board and lodging. Then, with a conscience somewhat lightened with regard to his parent, he prepared for sailing with his friend.

"Had my mother lived, I could not have dared to repay this sum under the circumstances. It would have seemed to her like an offered atonement for my disobedience, but I do not think that my father will object to receive it."

The four people associated together in the small house overlooking the sea were nervously depressed at the idea of their speedily advancing separation. Of these, the two men,

being most busy, had least time for regret ; the widow was the next least depressed, for she had to pack Edward's clothes, see that his shirts were all properly fitted with buttons, and his handkerchiefs marked, and a list made out of all his small possessions.

Edgar was so relieved by the consciousness of leaving Pleasance in easy circumstances, after having been pinched for money all his life, that he was nearly in good spirits. Poor Pleasance alone was utterly down-hearted ; she felt like a dog whose master is going a journey and is going to leave him at home. They are quite aware of facts of which their less intelligent possessors believe them to be ignorant. Their pleading eyes scarcely require the gift of language. Pleasance followed Edgar about in the like dumb sorrow. At length, as he was stooping over his portmanteau and pushing in the rebellious contents, and then using his strength to buckle the straps, she chose that most unpropitious of moments to say, with a wail and a sob—

“Oh, Edgar ! let me go too ! I promise I won't be a bit afraid. I was not afraid when

I was with you in the boat. Oh! ask the captain to let me come."

"My dear, don't be a goose! It is impossible to have women on board; you must be utterly foolish to ask such a thing," he said impatiently, for the strap was very hard to buckle, and folks are often more irritated with inanimate objects than with living creatures.

Pleasance was silenced, and devoured her tears in secret. She knew she was ignorant, and feared she was silly, so she had not a word to say in self-exculpation.

The hour came when they were to separate. Pleasance sat with pale cheeks and red eyelids, trying to swallow the cup of tea which made part of their evening meal.

"Now put on your bonnets, ladies, and come to the pier to see us off."

They came down dressed, Edgar having sneaked upstairs first to bestow a more passionate adieu on the lips of his young wife than he chose to perform in public. Then the four walked in silence to the pier.

"Cheer up, Mrs. Petrel," cried the kind-hearted lieutenant, "I will take care of this young fellow. Depend upon it, we shall both

come back safe; nought never comes to harm, you know. Good-bye, my mother! Now, Petrel, jump in."

Petrel lingered by Pleasance's side, then he kissed her hurriedly, notwithstanding all his good resolutions not to take leave again in public. She stood like marble, with sorrow too deep for any outward signs of emotion. Then the boat passed off. The griefs of parting, the petty anxieties of life on shore, were tossed from the minds that longed for active attrition with mankind, like the foam from the sparkling oar which impelled them on their way. There was no sparkle in the minds of the two women as they returned home, but rebellious grief in^c Pleasance, and resigned sorrow in the mother of Edward Heathdale.

They entered the doors, and passed into the little sitting-room, where it was dark and lonesome.

"Will you not go into your room and take off your hat and jacket, my dear?" said the widow, wishing to make Pleasance feel at home.

She went upstairs, feeling her way in the

dark, till she came to the room which she had occupied with Edgar. The Venetian blinds had not been let down, and one of the lamps which illuminated the esplanade threw its wan rays into the room, and on the ghostly-looking turned-down sheet of the bed. It began to rain; the sea moaned heavily with its continuous roar on the shingle which bordered the raised esplanade. Between it and the house there was a well-frequented road; over this carriages and cabriolets hurried in quick succession to get out of the gathering storm, the drivers shining in their waterproof coats, the occupants of the open carriages shrinking under umbrellas; the stream of busy life, all hastening to some home of probable comforts, to friends or relatives who were expecting them, and looking out for their coming, filled Pleasance with profound melancholy. She could weep no more, but she suffered not less. Edgar was gone away into the mist and darkness and rain, and she felt she should never see him again. Then she leant her head against the window-sill, and knelt and prayed, "God preserve my Edgar!" It was a thought seeking to be

heard in Heaven, rather than a prayer. To pray seemed to her presumptuous. She remained without moving or speaking, and filled with a feeling of unutterable sadness, for more than half an hour, when the widow knocked gently at the door; hearing no answer, she entered softly, and saw the position of the girl, which indicated humility and depression.

“Come down with me, my dear Mrs. Petrel; you did not eat or drink at tea-time. You must come down now, for I have made a fresh cup, and we will be comfortable together. Come, my dear.”

This time there was a tone of command in the utterance, and Pleasance came down to the cheerful lighted room, and was comforted.

In the evening the widow saw Pleasance looking at a work-table, the top of which was tessellated in different colours of wood, white and dark.

“Ah! is it not beautiful?” cried the widow, with enthusiasm. “Edward had it made for me. You see, my dear, I wanted a large work-bag to hold his socks when I had to

mend them. Then, in the evenings, he used to like me to play chess with him—all sailors like chess—so when he had saved a few pounds he bought this work-table, with the chess-board in different coloured woods—sandal-wood and rose-wood; the men I keep along with my work in the drawer.” The proud mother took out the pieces deliberately, and placed them on the board.

“How curious!” said Pleasance, in a low voice, touching one of the horse’s noses gingerly.

“Should you like to learn to play? Then you will be able to play with Mr. Petrel when he comes home, or even by letter. I often play with my son in his absence. I think it gives him a little more interest in my letters when he opens them, to see how I have answered his last move.”

“I should like it very much, but I am afraid you will find me very stupid, ma’am,” Pleasance replied, looking up as if she expected to be scolded or beaten for stupidity.

“Every one must have a learning,” said the widow, “and you shall only learn the moves, or part of them, to-night.”

When Pleasance had learnt the moves, she wanted to test her new knowledge, and asked Mrs. Heathdale to play a game with her. She had the quickness of memory and combination possessed by many of the uneducated, who, in counting, not unfrequently beat the educated arithmetician, and she was eager to be taught.

“Did Edgar play chess?” she asked.

“Yes; he played with Edward very often.”

This was an additional incentive, and the hours passed more quickly than the young wife could have believed possible till half-past nine struck, and Mrs. Heathdale rang for Mary, the servant, and read prayers, praying for all those who travel by land and by water. When Pleasance rose from her knees, her face was once more streaming with tears, but she was withal weary; and the widow, when Pleasance had crept into bed, came and tucked up the clothes and extinguished the candle. She would have let down the blinds, but Pleasance begged they might remain as they were, for the lamps seemed like company; so she lay back on her pillow and gazed on them, and on the ever murmuring, tumbling

sea coming in with its long-extended white rollers, and listened to the voices of the night, and thought of Edgar with a feeling of intolerable dreariness because he was gone away far over those dim waters into the unknown darkness. Edgar had light and cheerful companions, and though he thought tenderly of his young wife, he was not half so sad as she believed him to be.

CHAPTER XXI.

*"Some weep in perfect justice to the dead,
As knowing all their love is in arrears."*

WHEN the Reverend Jasper Petrel had buried his wife, he thought of appearing again in the pulpit, which he had not considered it etiquette to do under the deep dejection of his first loss. He remained in his study, with the blinds drawn down, for a week ; but that time was not utterly lost, for he employed great part of it in writing a most eloquent sermon on death, in which he painted the desolation of the home which had lost its dearest inmate, and the heart-wrench suffered by the survivor of so much amiability and virtue. He worked himself up to such a pitch of enthusiasm as he wrote, that he believed that he felt all that he described.

Mr. Petrel was a keen magistrate, a highly educated man, and a fluent speaker, but, above all, there were in him the requisites of a good actor spoilt. He felt himself like a gem lost in dark unfathomed caves of ocean when he tried to arouse the dull minds of ploughmen, heavy with their one meal in seven of fat pork and cabbage. They sat in a row in their smockfrocks, looking down at their corduroy trousers or leather leggings and clumsy shoes. Sometimes the head fell suspiciously and suddenly lower than usual. Mr. Petrel, looking up from an eloquent peroration, saw the movement, and spoke the following sentences in a stentorian voice *at* the offender. His terrified neighbours nudged his arm and kicked his shins with covert decorum, till he started up with glaring eyes and a flushed face, looking more idiotic than before he sank into slumber. Oh, why should ploughmen be so coarse and clergy be so fine? I suspect it is the pearl flung before swine, and that if a fine porker sat up on his hind quarters and grunted to them in their own language, the effect would be greater on their thoughts and conduct; otherwise, why should the new light

run like wildfire through remote villages, influencing the lives, and purifying the actions of the inhabitants?

The new lights were a growing mortification to Mr. Petrel; one of the sect had contaminated the family with whom the sectarian lodged—a silent, reserved man, except at the meetings of the brethren, and then he had a rough kind of eloquence that went home to the hearts of those he addressed. He could read the Bible—that was all; but it was enough. His attention had been intensified towards sacred subjects from the loss of his only boy of eight years of age, the terrible dread of death and subsequent torment expressed by this poor child had filled the mind of the father with unutterable consternation. He was too conscientious to tell his boy that he would not die, but he told him of God's mercy, and of the arms of the Almighty which would enfold and keep him from harm.

"Oh, father, I know you; I like your arms best—hold me, that I may not go away into the dark."

He expired smiling in the morning light, and the stricken father essayed to act so that he might meet him in heaven.

His wages were very meagre, and he had to apply to the parish for funds to bury his boy. He also owed the union money supplied to him when he was out of work. Shortly after the loss of his son he came into thirteen pounds, a legacy which he shared with other distant relatives of a man who died intestate. Ephraim Fell's first act on receiving the money was to carry it to the union, that the Poor Law Board might take enough to repay its expenditure on him and his son. This reduced the money to about four pounds, and this he expended in placing a stone over his boy's grave. Ephraim Fell's example first led the cottager's family to evening prayer. He taught them that if a man did not labour with a good heart for his master, if he was indolent, or loitered when he was not watched, he was dishonest, in that he robbed his employer of his fair amount of work. He told the women that they were discreditable when they dressed beyond their station, and that to go in debt for finery was to deck themselves in the livery of Satan, and show that they were his servants, for which the devil would one day claim them,

who had already adopted his mark and wore his colours. Then he sang a hymn, and the family joined. The cottagers on either side heard the sounds, and joined in them. The tenets were very simple : to give up worldly vanities and worldly lusts, and to owe no man anything. The public-houses were nearly emptied during the accession of this religious enthusiasm. The little shops found that the new lights were their best customers, for they paid all their debts, and would not be persuaded to purchase more than they could meet by ready money.

Some old toppers, accustomed to their snug corners in the public-house and in the church, declared they would never leave the clergyman. Amongst these were to be found the *noddies*, whom Mr. Petrel served as Dryden recommended—

“ And roused them with a rattling peal of thunder.”

“ Oh, these chaw-bacons !” he thought, coming out of the pulpit wearily, after he had preached his eloquent sermon on death, and used his pocket-handkerchief plentifully. Behind the cambric folds he had been com-

forted by seeing the observant face of a pale, elegantly-dressed lady, no longer young, but well preserved, who held in one delicate hand a gold pencil-case, and in the other a note-book, into which she had been evidently putting notes of his sermon in short-hand.

"Appreciative, but unpleasant," said Mr. Petrel, thinking that she might find him out in thieving some Sunday forenoon. "I must look out for some of poor Margaret's compositions," he added to himself; "there were some good points in that woman; she never failed me, even when she had to suckle a squalling brat, when I had to preach before some high dignitary, who, having been a thief, might detect a thief."

He went to the vestry to take off his surplice, and looking from the little arched window, he saw that the fair note-taker was standing alone at the gate of the church-yard, waiting for her carriage.

"Ah! I see," said Mr. Petrel, "thought it would be five-and-twenty minutes—found it barely twenty, and quite long enough too." He hastened politely to throw off his clerical gear, and joined the lady, inviting her to sit

down in the vestry whilst he sent one of the school children to "the Saplings," where the carriage was put up. He spoke grandly, but he doubted finding a messenger, as all the little tribe had hastened home to their hebdomadal hot dinner.

Miss East declined, with a look of bashful gratitude; her men would be round with the carriage in a few minutes, no doubt. "Mr. Petrel, the clergyman, I presume?"

The gentleman bowed.

"My name is East," continued the stranger.

"I think you have only recently come to Willowwater," observed the clergyman. "I trust you like your new residence, and may be induced to remain in our neighbourhood."

"I am not tied to any locality," replied the pale lady, who was most exquisitely dressed. "I may confess that I am seeking to establish myself near some pastor whose ministrations may tend to the salvation of my soul."

"Alas!" cried the clever pastor who was present, falling at once into the tone of the speaker, "we hear constantly of reasons for choosing a dwelling-place in the salubrity of

the air, the convenience of a residence, the vicinity of Clearwater, but how few are of so godly a frame of mind as to make the pure and effective preaching of the gospel a *sine qua non*? The expression of such sentiments, Miss East, only renders me more desirous that you may be tempted to remain in this vicinity. It is not often," with a heavy sigh, "that one finds a congenial spirit in this weary world—" Mr. Petrel's handkerchief (it was one of poor Margaret's) went to his face, "to hide the eyes unconscious of a tear." It was affecting.

The countenance of Miss East glanced at the speaker sympathetically, and Mr. Petrel saw it. It was a marvellous touch of nature in an old drama on Alcestis, that, when she had consented to undergo the penalty of death for Admetus, she should entreat him not to bring a new bride to sleep in the sheets Alcestis had woven for their bed.

Mr. Petrel had always borrowed the only good articles of dress possessed by Margaret, namely, half-a-dozen fine cambric handkerchiefs left her by a deceased sister. They

were large enough for a man, having been made in scorn of modern fashions. After her death, Mr. Petrel went to her drawer, and locked them up in one of his own. "Mary will be taking them," he said, "if I do not." He alluded to his eldest daughter, who was fifteen, and was fast becoming learned on the subject of female adornment.

Mr. Petrel handed Miss East into the carriage with a glance of most respectful devotion, and stood watching it with his hat yet lifted, till the occupant of it could no longer distinguish him, he thought; then he returned home, and pondered on many things.

"That carriage and those horses, footman and coachman, mean not less than two thousand a-year—not bad looking. I wonder she was never snapped up before." Mr. Petrel did not know that Miss East had only just come into possession of her fortune by the death of an aunt.

Mr. Petrel went on with a running commentary in his own mind: "Rather too thin—but what a stepper that grey was—the pair not bad; I always had a good eye for a horse,

but it was impossible, with my income and so many incumbrances, to enjoy any manly pleasure. Margaret always sacrificed me to her children, especially to Edgar." He was rather taken with Miss East's appearance. Margaret, whom he had married for love against the wishes of his friends, was rather above the middle height, dark-haired, and brilliant in colour. Miss East was pale-eyed and light-haired, with a chin too long for good proportion. Sterne declares that a woman about to marry a second time looks out for a man diametrically opposite in every way to the dear deceased, and this seemed to be Mr. Petrel's case. Poor Margaret was always shabby, and how exquisitely Miss East was attired!

Miss Mary Petrel had taken her late mother's place at the luncheon-table, and was ready to carve the Yorkshire pudding with uplifted spoons, looking to her father to do the same good office with the beef. "She is too young—she takes a great deal too much on herself," was the father's thought, who foresaw painful struggles as to deposition in the future. In the mind of the sanguine

man he had already proposed to Miss East, and been accepted.

Miss East had gone through the world hitherto without a lover. It was a grief to her that she had never been asked to sacrifice her virgin state. Her sister, on the contrary, had married twice. In the small intercourse which took place between them, Mrs. Seaward, the wife of the magistrate who had committed poor Pleasance to prison, was in the habit of saying, "Really, my dear Jane, as a married woman, I would advise you," &c., and "As a married woman I must be the best judge," &c. Now Jane thought if she were married and had the management of a large family, her sister having but one boy, she should attain a moral platform infinitely higher than that of her sister.

"What a charming, self-denying creature is Mr. Petrel's second wife, and what a good mother she makes to all those troublesome children," the world would observe.

Mr. Petrel was so handsome a man, so gentleman-like in his manner. She walked to the looking-glass on her return from church, and examined her appearance, to judge, if possible,

what impression she had made. She saw the reflection of a long, pale face, and an unattractive figure ; but no person is uncomely in their own eyes, and Miss East pronounced herself to be interesting and graceful, and, above all, pure and intellectual in expression.

Mr. Petrel did not expect to see her again in the afternoon. There was no sermon, and the distance from her residence was rather too far for the horses, if, indeed, they were to be kept in the comfortable state of fat they then possessed, so he was content to smoke his cigar and give a few sentimental thoughts to poor Margaret.

Somehow, Margaret's image would come back to him, not as the care-worn woman he had last seen her, but as he wooed her, when she was sparkling and brilliant as a night of stars in June. He had been a fool then in marrying for love ; a pretty hash he had made of *that* business. He was wiser now, and he thought of Miss East's carriage and horses, those outward and visible signs of a well-reporting bank-book. "Anyhow," he said to himself, looking at the awkward manipula-

tions of his eldest daughter with the pudding, "anyhow, it could not take place for twelve months—propriety forbids. I must keep my eye on her, and see that no one else becomes intimate at Willowwater."

CHAPTER XXII.

“ The visit over, we delighted come,
As from a seven years’ transportation, home.”

EVERY one has surroundings of some kind. If you go to a new residence in a small, or even in a great town, and make up your mind to *see*, *i.e.* to visit no one, and fancy you have made a bulwark of isolation round yourself, you will find that all your neighbours take the liveliest interest in your welfare. They find out how many loaves the baker leaves daily, and whether they are of the usual quality or French bread ; whether you buy prime joints of the butcher, or take the meat “ all round ;” and, above all, what place of worship you frequent, and what are your religious proclivities.

When Mrs. Heathdale had first settled at

Plymouth, having only her widow's pension, and what her son could spare from his pay, for her support, she made up her mind to know no one. Vain resolve! An attack of rheumatism, which, by its intensity, beat down her determination not to have a doctor, brought upon her the doctor's wife, who came unasked, and sat by her during the painful hours of night, applying hot fomentations, smoothing the bedclothes disordered by the tossings of fever, and shaking up and replacing the heated pillow, till sleep came down, soft as snowflakes, on the troubled brain.

When she recovered, she called on Mrs. Peterson to express her gratitude; but was assured that no thanks were needed.

"When Peterson becomes interested in a case, he always sends me to nurse his patients, that I may see nothing can interfere with the exhibition of his medicines."

The mother possessed the remains of great beauty. The two daughters were clumsy in figure and unusually plain. Mrs. Heathdale looked at them with satisfaction: she did not believe that Edward could ever fall in love

with either of them ; and that conviction consoled her for their insisting on being social. Sailors are always attracted by anything young and pretty when they first come on shore ; but he never *could*, she determined, fall in love with Miss Jemima or Miss Jane, so she consented to go and take tea sometimes with them, and receive them in return. To know one family is as the letting out of waters. They had their relatives and acquaintances, who became in their turn visitors of the quiet widow. A widow who possessed that treasure, an unmarried son, was sure to be treated with deference by every unmarried lady, widow or virgin. She was never suspected of any design on their single relatives, bachelors or widowers. She held the even tenor of her way, was always ready to admire the patchwork quilts of the old, the worsted-work of the middle-aged, and the feeble drawings and more feeble voices of the young, in their accomplishments as amateur artists and musicians. She pretended to none of those modes of passing time, and therefore could exceed none of those who claimed her admiration, and passed as a kind-hearted woman,

not clever herself, but with a quick appreciation of that quality in others.

In the midst of all this social intercourse, the lieutenant arrived from sea. What could she do ! She was divided between her desire to exhibit him at a tea-party, where there was to be "a little music," and her dread lest some of the white-robed innocents who formed the choir should assail and conquer the heart of the susceptible Jack-tar. She had half a mind to plead headache, and give that as an excuse for avoiding the entertainment, but the certainty that Mr. Peterson would come at once, armed with remedies for which she would have to pay, whether she swallowed them or not, decided her to dare the dangers of the night. To let Edward go by himself was not to be thought of ; so they went together.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“Lothario’s treat, what fair one could withstand,
If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand?”

EDWARD tumbled into love at once with a simple child-like-looking girl of eighteen, who sang, in a pretty chirrupy little voice, something about flowers in May.

Edward thought her a fairy vision—something too bright and beautiful for earth, when a tall, graceful, dark-eyed woman of about five and twenty stood by the piano, and whilst the organist played the accompaniment for her, threw a world of passionate utterance into “Robert, toi que j’aime.” Her voice was full and rich, and Edward thought, “If the other be heaven, I am content with earth.”

When, at the conclusion, the ladies sang in chorus, he loved them all, and would have

been content to marry them each singly, or all at once.

The river that is divided into a dozen different streams cannot make a deep indentation. When he awoke next morning, the beauty of the women seemed "like a baseless fabric of a vision," and certainly left "not a wreck behind."

When Pleasance was left with Mrs. Heathdale, many thoughts passed through the widow's mind as to the judgments which would be formed of her new inmate by the little segment of the world by which she was bordered.

"If she will but be quiet," Mrs. Heathdale said, "they may not find out she is such a little rustic. I cannot make her a lady, as by the stroke of a fairy's wand, but she looks particularly graceful, and her beauty is beyond compare. That, however, will be a disadvantage, rather than not, with the ladies."

Mrs. Heathdale had said nothing of the wedding which had so recently been solemnized. She learnt from her son that it was a stolen one, and thought that such subjects had better not be touched on. The honest-hearted

lieutenant knew only that young Petrel had promised to marry a girl in a low grade of society, and that she was very beautiful, and that he was very honourable and very much in love. His sympathy went with the young sailor, whom he knew and liked, rather than with the stately father, of whom he had never heard anything very agreeable.

Thus, thinking to do a kind thing to his friend, and a pecuniary benefit to his mother, he suggested the arrangement.

"If she wants a little polishing off," he said, "my old lady is just the person to give a hint in time. Bless your heart! no one could live with my mother long without becoming a lady. She infects every one around her by her gentleness and grace; even the servants learn to be less coarse and uncultivated when they have spent a few years under her care."

"My dear child!" said Mrs. Heathdale, gently, "what can have made your little hands so brown and rough?"

"Picking the ore out and washing it on the mine, ma'am," answered Pleasance, without an idea that there was anything to conceal.

"You worked on the mine?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You must not call me ma'am."

Pleasance looked puzzled.

"My lady?" interrogatively.

"No, my dear; nothing at all except Mrs. Heathdale sometimes. We must contrive to get your hands whiter before they are seen by anybody."

"Must they be seen—that is, I mean, must I see folks? Oh dear!"

"You will soon get accustomed to society; you need not say much, only 'yes' or 'no' when you are spoken to, till—till you know a little more."

Mrs. Heathdale wondered what she could do to amuse Pleasance. She took out her work-basket, and displayed a pair of half-finished slippers.

"Should you not like to work a pair for your husband?"

"I am afraid I should do it very badly."

"Never mind, I will teach you the stitch on a piece of spare canvas, and when you have learnt to do it without drawing your hand too tight, or fraying the lamb's-wool, we

will go out and buy the materials for a pair of slippers for Mr. Petrel."

Pleasance soon learnt the stitch, and claimed the promise. It was fortunate that they had provided occupation, as for the next three days the windows of heaven seemed opened, and the rain descended incessantly.

Mrs. Heathdale took the opportunity of correcting the intonation and grammar of her inmate. The most inveterate custom was that which she possessed of using the second person singular when addressing Mrs. Heathdale, and that not always grammatically.

The kind-hearted woman began to love her gentle companion, whose voice was always soft and sweet in tone, and whose conduct was always obedient. The lieutenant was right in saying that his mother shed a halo of refinement over all her surroundings. The education of Pleasance progressed unconsciously, though she was unable as yet to read and write.

One day the postman brought two letters to the door. The widow gave an exclamation of thankful delight, and tore open the

thin cover with eagerness. Pleasance stood looking at the address of hers in a hopeless manner, after the servant had given it into her hand and left the room. The letters were from Madeira, and the lieutenant's sheets were crammed with the narration of small nothings, which he knew would interest his mother, because they had interested him. She read on in exquisite enjoyment, greater than that of the gardener who plants a tree which he has watched growing up, and which now yields shelter to his age, and fruit grateful to his palate. She forgot all in her pleasure, till she looked up at Pleasance and saw her holding her opened letter sadly in her hand, and looking at it vaguely.

"Well, my dear," cried the widow, cheerfully, "what does he say?"

"Will you read it to me, Mrs. Heathdale? I do not know how to read," and Pleasance looked down, with great tears in her eyes.

Mrs. Heathdale had wondered that Pleasance never took up a book unless there were pictures in it. She had not expected such a depth of ignorance in the present day. She did not like to read the poor boy's letter to

his young wife, but Pleasance entreated that she should so piteously, that she could not but consent.

"Pleasance, you must learn to write ; you can read print, no doubt?"

"No ; I never learnt to read."

"My dear child, is it possible?"

"Grannie could not read ; she said she never saw no good come of book learning."

"Not no good—never saw any good. But you would like to learn?"

"Yes, if you will teach me."

So Pleasance had a lesson regularly every morning and evening in reading and writing.

But Mrs. Heathdale had a blow still more severe dealt her by her unconscious lodger. Mrs. Heathdale had taken a second day's newspaper before the advent of Pleasance, and now felt that she could afford one for a few hours on the day of its publication. From this she read aloud anything likely to amuse Pleasance, when the most important part, *i.e.*, the shipping intelligence, had been glanced over to seek for any mention of the "Isis."

One day Pleasance took up the paper, and

began painfully to spell out one of the committals for theft. The culprit was a poor woman, and the sympathies of Pleasance were all given to "her order," as completely as those of Lord Grey to his. She could not read it all.

"This is so different," she said, addressing Mrs. Heathdale. "The words are so hard; will you read it to me?"

The woman, who was a domestic servant, had taken a sovereign found in the room of a guest, and had kept it. She was convicted of the theft, and had a fortnight's imprisonment with hard labour.

"Ah!" cried Pleasance, "that was hard indeed! They only gave me a fortnight, without hard labour."

"What!" cried Mrs. Heathdale, in consternation; "were you ever imprisoned for theft?"

Pleasance looked up with the terrible consciousness that a girl might suffer who drops from her hands a valuable china jar, which lies in fragments at the feet of her mistress, whose awful eyes are upon her.

"Did you not know?" she whispered, with dry lips and staring eyes.

"Know? How could I?" asked the lady, indignantly.

The pathetic and the ludicrous are often strangely mixed in our daily existence. Pleasance felt that her whole life depended on the impression she should make on Mrs. Heathdale in Edgar's absence, and Mrs. Heathdale was thinking of danger to her small amount of old plate, of her few rings and brooches, and even of her body and table linen.

"I cannot keep a thief in the house," she said to herself; "she must go; she must be altogether a good-for-nothing girl," Mrs. Heathdale argued, thinking that the virtues are pearls strung on a thread, and that if one escape from the severed string, the rest are sure to follow.

She did not speak for so long, that Pleasance became very pale, and retired to her own room.

As she did not return for some time, Mrs. Heathdale relented, and went to seek her,

when she found her kneeling with her head on a chair, sobbing bitterly.

"Come, come, don't cry," said her friend, rather alarmed.

"Must I go? Will you send me away?"

"Tell me the circumstances," replied the lady.

Pleasance began in a low voice, and made her friend acquainted with all the story. The purse had been held out to the girl as a lure. She had thought herself justified in keeping what was offered for an immoral purpose. The law would have held that Mr. Pike was not liable for the payment of the money had he succeeded in his intention. Most moral law!

Mrs. Heathdale was relieved as to the amount of danger to her silver spoons, but she saw all the difficulties in the way of keeping a girl who had been in jail for theft. Supposing Pleasance "had only broke Diana's law" before her marriage, a little suppression of dates or confusion about them in after years would make the little slip, hidden by the rich folds of a wedding dress, easily blinked at or disposed of; but even

such a fine word as kleptomania would hardly reconcile respectable people to visiting where they might be afraid to put down a pocket handkerchief or a pencil-case, on the chance of its disappearing into unreachable receptacles.

"Is it very bad?" asked Pleasance.

"So bad that Mrs. and the Misses Peterson, and Mrs. Luttrell, and Mrs. Adams, the clergyman's wife, would not speak to you, nor to me for having you living with me."

Pleasance did not know any of the folks enumerated by her friend, but they immediately became awful and avenging deities in her idea, terrible to offend. Such deities does society become; and its influences are for the greatest part wholesome, for the verdict of the majority is generally right, though it may press hard on individual instances.

When Pleasance heard the bell ring, she retreated to her room, in dread lest she might see some of these awful folk, who might wither her with their scorn. The small circle of acquaintances in which Mrs. Heathdale moved were filled with curiosity to see the young married lady who lived with her.

The two Miss Petersons were quite wild, they said, to see Mrs. Petrel. "So very sad that she should be so soon separated from her husband!"

"Will she not come down and see us, dear Mrs. Heathdale?"

"Thank you, kindly; I have no doubt she will when she has recovered her spirits; at present she is much depressed."

"All the more reason why she should have a little cheerful society."

"It is always best, I find," said the widow sententiously, "to let people have their own way on these occasions. They are like sick folks, who will never eat when they are pressed to do so; leave them alone, and they soon fancy they can pick a bit. I will bring her with me one day when I call on Mrs. Peterson;" and with this the old-young ladies were obliged to be content.

Mrs. Heathdale felt that the morning visit might be made as short as she pleased, if she took Pleasance with her; and that the two ladies might wear out the patience and the good manners of Pleasance if they stayed too long at the small house near the sea.

One day when Pleasance and the widow were walking, Mrs. Heathdale took her to the door of the house where the Petersons dwelt ; and before Pleasance was aware of it she had to follow her friend into the small library, where Mr. Peterson was sitting amongst his account books and papers. To old folks a little interruption of their occupations is sometimes a subject of interest and agreeable variety.

Mrs. Peterson liked the quiet widow, and having had her curiosity excited about her friend's inmate, she was delighted to be able to judge for herself, especially as, her daughters being out, she would have a little subject of triumph over them, knowing more than they knew. So she arose from her work-table, dropping her balls of lambswool, which rolled all over the carpet. Pleasance picked them up as quickly as they fell, and came over to the strange old lady with a smile on her face, and with hands full of the errant balls.

"Thank you very much. I am sure I am sorry you have had so much trouble, my dear," said Mrs. Peterson, looking into the childish face of Pleasance ; "but surely you are not Mrs. Petrel ?"

"Yes, I am, madam," replied Pleasance, blushing.

Mrs. Heathdale came to the rescue, and began to praise the skilful execution of the work.

"Look, Pleasance! how regular the stitches are, and how very bright the colours."

Pleasance admired as much as Mrs. Peterson desired, and then stood back to allow Mrs. Heathdale to converse with her friend.

The attention of Pleasance was caught by some curious shells on the chimney-piece. She went up to them to examine them more closely. Mr. Peterson took one up, and put it into her hands.

"Very curious, is it not?" said he. "Do you study conchology? Many ladies do."

"Oh, no!" cried poor Pleasance. "I know nothing about it."

Mrs. Heathdale heard and trembled for Pleasance, but she could not interrupt Mrs. Peterson in a long story about a rich silk she had purchased, which had split into tatters the second day she wore it; and how the mercer had refused compensation, because, he said, it was far worse for him, when he had the whole piece of silk on his hands.

Presently Mrs. Heathdale heard Mr. Peterson pull out a drawer.

"Perhaps you care for mineralogy, Mrs. Petrel?"

Pleasance was about to say she knew nothing about it, as she had done before; but peeping into the drawer she saw many familiar objects, and, pointing her gloved finger, she named the ores accurately, and exclaimed with delighted enthusiasm, when Mr. Peterson, throwing open a case, exhibited a magnificent specimen of lead, which shone like frozen snow.

"It should have a glass over it," said Pleasance.

"One has been ordered," said the old gentleman. "I expect it home to-morrow."

"It is lucky it did not get broken in travelling."

"My dear young lady, I had it brought from the mine by two men carrying a pole, on which it was slung. You are far advanced in the knowledge of minerals; probably your father was a collector."

"My parents died just as I was born," replied Pleasance; "but my grandmother was a great collector."

This was strictly true, as the old woman used to fill boxes with specimens, to obtain a few shillings from any chance visitors to the mines.

Mrs. Heathdale heard every word, and was on tenterhooks as to what further revelations Pleasance might make; so she turned to Mr. Peterson, and said they must not intrude any longer on his valuable time. In vain he protested that the visit had been far too short. Mrs. Heathdale carried off her young charge, thankful that she had acquitted herself very creditably, and had neither removed her gloves from her hands nor her curb from her lips.

"Did I behave well?" asked poor Pleasance, anxiously.

"No one could behave better," replied her friend.

Mrs. Heathdale was anxious that Pleasance should not disgrace her, but yet more desirous that she should mix in the little world by which her friend was surrounded. She was a wise woman, and knew that people always measure themselves by the standard of those amongst whom they dwell. Unconsciously

they begin to judge themselves as they know they would be judged if all were known of their actions. Morality has always been on a sliding scale. The Roman fathers who left their newborn infants on the rushes to be exposed to a lingering death from starvation, or to be eaten by birds and ants, thought no worse of themselves, because they knew that thousands of fathers were probably doing the same thing, with no loss of social approbation. The Nautch girls are proud of their race and occupation, and its time honoured observances. Thus Mrs. Heathdale thought it good for Pleasance to gauge the opinions of persons above the rank in which she had been born.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Faith is not built on disquisitions vain,
The things we must believe are few and plain."
DRYDEN.

A GOOD-NATURED maiden lady used to hold Dorcas meetings once a fortnight. All the serious ladies attended, and drank tea and made garments for the poor—one of the company being selected to read to the rest whilst the others sewed. Mrs. Heathdale wished Pleasance to accompany her to these meetings, but she shrank from doing so.

"You know I sew so badly; I should be ashamed."

"That is a good reason that you should learn to sew better. Every good wife can sew to mend her husband's clothes."

"But the ladies will laugh at my poor work!"

"Very well; I will go alone next Friday, and you must hem diligently till the following Friday, which will be at the distance of three weeks from the present time."

Pleasance sighed, and consented. She disliked every occupation which interrupted her study of reading and writing, for writing and reading would bring her nearer to her husband.

The Dorcas meetings had been of a very grave, not to say formal, character when first instituted; one starched, middle-aged married woman distributed the tea, looking as if she wished it might disagree with all the recipients—a desire not unlikely to be fulfilled, considering the price given for the article; as, however, the meetings increased in numbers, some mental oil was diffused over the works. The workers gave and received consolation for their efforts; they had religion, tempered by scandal, for the subject of discussion.

There were Church of England ladies, who knew but little of her doctrines, but were con-

vinced they must be the correct ones, because they were those of the Established Church ; there were the wives and daughters of dissenting ministers, who were ready to fight tooth and nail for their husbands' and fathers' reasons for separating themselves from the Church, but were very proud, all the same, of any notice from ladies who attended it, because "somehow it seemed more genteel" than their own; and there were Catholic ladies who looked down with tragical contempt on all the rest, as the majestic forest oak might regard the creepers which supported themselves on its trunk, and flaunted in feeble and ephemeral verdure — a symbolical religion, which delights

" In crosses, relics, crucifixes,
Beads, pictures, rosaries and pixes ;
The tools of working out salvation,
By mere mechanic operation."

It was the duty of Mr. Syer, the curate, to try to be well with all the different denominations of Christians ; but he had made a faint stand on the point that all the ladies of the Dorcas club, should have that claim on

his tea ministration : they should be professing Christians.

Mrs. Bone, the starched, middle-aged married lady, thought that was fair, and so expressed herself to the young curate ; on which he suggested the exclusion of little Mrs. Deepdale, who attended the Unitarian chapel.

The stiff Mrs. Bone declared that she could not decide without consulting her husband. Mr. Syer shuddered. Bone was a carcase butcher ; not a man who sold trumpery joints, but one who "went the whole hog" with the retail butchers. It was not his dealing in flesh that made the cold shiver run down the spine of the pale, delicate young curate. It was because he was a heathen and a radical.

Mrs. Bone applied to her oracle.

"I am for liberty for all denominations of Christians," cried the reformer.

"But that's just it," cried the wife. "She declares she is not a Christian at all."

"I'll ask' her," responded the man of action ; and took his hat and disappeared.

Half an hour later he returned radiant with triumph.

"Well?" asked his wife.

"Well, Mrs. B., she is a Christian, and I will not have her turned out; as I was hurrying along the road I saw a little lady stoop to pick up a child that had fallen and cut its head on the pavement; she used her delicate white handkerchief to bind up the wound; when I got nearer I saw it was young Mrs. Deepdale; says I, 'Ma'am, they tell me that you do not believe in Jesus Christ, though, judging from what I see, I suppose they are wrong.' 'Very wrong,' the lady said in a quiet voice. 'Then you do believe in Jesus Christ?' 'Yes; I believe that he was the best man that ever lived.' 'There now!' says I; 'I'm sure no one can speak fairer than *that*.' So you see your Mr. Syer was quite wrong."

"Oh dear! oh dear! I fear that does not go to the root of the matter," said Mrs. Bone.

"Root or fruit, I will not have that pretty little lamb turned out of the fold," said Mr. Bone; and Mrs. Bone was compelled to recon-

cile the young curate in the best manner she could.

He, unconvinced, appealed to his rector, whose Easter offerings made part of his stipend.

"Better let it pass, my dear sir," said the Reverend Mr. Blaze. "The poor church has few adherents; what with those who go to Rome, and the Unitarians, and the shoals of new lights amongst the lower orders. I am an old-fashioned fellow, and like to keep at peace. There is many an one wearied with discussions and controversies, who will find it a comfort to creep to the bosom of the Established Church at last, if they are not scared away by opposition to their fancies. I find it best not to notice schism which I cannot prevent. If a mischievous boy runs along the edge of a cliff, or climbs to the top of an elm-tree to make you wonder at his temerity, turn your head another way, and he will in time return to your side."

So Mr. Syer obeyed; but he hated those evenings of the Dorcas Society. He generally contrived to read aloud some account likely to interest his hearers, to avoid the

very small wishy-washy talk which "murmuring flowed, and flowed for ever," amongst the fair needle-women.

They sat in a well-lighted room at a round table, each seemingly intent on the children's dresses or the under-clothing they were making. They worked for two hours, and then came the refreshment of tea. There was Mrs. Bone, the Wesleyan ; Mrs. Deepdale, the Unitarian ; Mrs. Wood, the Quakeress ; Miss Challis, the Catholic lady of a certain age, whose mind had never been troubled by a doubt of the truth of all the nurse and all the priest had taught ; but as Mrs. Bone drew no distinction in the division of the clothing between the Catholics and Protestants, Miss Challis gave her services willingly to the good cause.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Live well, and then how soon soe'er thou die,
Thou art of age to claim eternity."

PLEASANCE sat as near as possible to Mrs. Heathdale, hoping for assistance if she should be troubled in her sewing. It was a terrible task for her ; she fancied that the eyes of all the assembled ladies were fixed on her trembling fingers. Sewing, as it ought to be done, is by no means an easy accomplishment. The face of Pleasance grew flushed with the effort to place her needle at proper distances in the hem of the cotton dress which Mrs. Heathdale had carefully turned down for her. She let the dress fall on her lap, and threw back the glowing countenance and her light dishevelled hair, and looked at Mr. Syer, who stood opposite to her, with the comfortable

conviction in her mind that one person in the company could not criticize her sewing. Then the idea that if all were revealed of her antecedents, she should be dismissed with ignominy from the society of those respectable women by whom she was surrounded, gave such a scared and troubled expression to her face, that Mr. Syer was filled with sympathy. He did not think she was married, only a child she seemed in her infantine beauty.

"Ladies, if you are ready with your sewing, I should like to read the 'Times' account of the wreck of the 'Birkenhead.'"

Pleasance, alarmed, turned to her friend.

"Yes, my dear—west coast of Africa—not in the Mediterranean, you know; besides, that is not the name of our vessel, you foolish thing."

"No, no," gasped poor Pleasance; "only if there was a storm it might have wrecked more ships than one."

Mr. Syer heard something imperfectly of this whispered dialogue, and answered, "There was no storm;—

" 'The air was calm, and on the level brine,
Sleek Panope and all her sisters played.' "

"Pray read the account," said several ladies at once, the interest attaching to something terrible strangling the desire to talk scandal for the time.

Then Mr. Syer, who had a brother in the navy, began to read the letters from the survivors in a voice frequently tremulous from emotion. One letter spoke of Commander Salmond and Colonel Seton standing side by side at the helm saving all who could be saved, but making no effort for self-preservation. They had seen all the women and children into the second cutter, and when the captain told all that could swim to endeavour to save themselves, Colonel Seton and the other military officers desired the soldiers not to make for the boats, by which they might endanger the safety of the women and children, and the doomed men obeyed. Before they left the vessel they presented arms as on parade, and so sank. The grandest proof of discipline and self-devotion in a large body of men ever known. Four hundred and thirty-eight men perished, but not one woman or child.

Pleasance wept abundantly. There were

tears in the voice of the reader, and they dropped from the eyes of many ladies over their plain sewing.

"It is dreadful," said the Catholic lady ;
"no time for confession or absolution."

"Ah !" cried Mrs. Tweed, the Quaker lady ;
"to think that the poor misguided men should have gone into the presence of their Maker presenting arms, those sinful implements of a sinful profession."

"I declare," cried Mrs. Heathdale, "I do not think any martyrs for their religion ever left life more nobly than those devoted men."

"But thou must confess that the profession of arms, either in the army or navy, is contrary to the inculcations of our Saviour," returned Mrs. Tweed.

"I am sure I do not know that," cried the former lady, with much heat ; "but this I do know, that but for these two professions England would be a heap of barren ashes before five years were over."

"Better that than to disobey the injunction of the Saviour, who said, 'Resist not evil ; but if a man smite thee on the right cheek turn to him also thy left.'"

In the meantime Pleasance was wiping her eyes and striving to recover her composure.

"What is your opinion, miss?"

"Oh!" cried Pleasance, with another burst of sorrow, "I was thinking what a waste it was that those fine, generous men should be drowned instead of the weakly women and useless children, who were only an incumbrance."

This new impression of the fact made every one silent for a space, and the women were all affronted with Pleasance for her opinion.

"Dear me! Well! thou dost not value thy own sex much, friend," cried the Quaker.

Pleasance saw the black looks louring on her—the Miss Petersons the blackest, because their father had so enthusiastically praised the young wife. She looked at her female friend, who seemed troubled, then at Mr. Syer, by whom the unfortunate observation was received with more leniency than by the women.

"I agree with you, my dear young lady, in your estimation of the different value of the sexes on that occasion; for to save is more worthy than to be saved; but had the men grasped at the chances of escape for

themselves, they would have been selfish and unworthy our pity."

Then he was anxious to turn their attention in another direction, and away from the outspoken young lady, who bent her face lower over her work, ashamed of having given expression to a very natural opinion.

"When I was staying, last Christmas, with my brother, in one of the eastern counties, the following facts came to my knowledge; and I wrote them down, under the impression they then made on me. When, ladies, you have arranged your sewing materials quietly, for the rustling of drapery and demands for scizzors, thimbles, and reels of cotton are rather depressing to a reader, I shall be willing to read you the 'History of James May.'"*

The reading of this story occupied the company till the tea was brought in, and the work folded to await the next weekly meeting of the society.

Mr. Syer wished for a cup—it would have relieved his throat after the exertion of reading aloud; but he knew that he should have

* Omitted from its length.

to hand the cups, and the difficulties of pleasing them all and offending no one were too great to permit his allowing himself that indulgence. The after consequences would be too painful, so he departed without it.

The ladies gathered round Mrs. Bone to receive their cups of tea.

"It is a comfort to have something hot before we set out for our walk home," said that austere lady; "and really it does not come before it is wanted, for our curate reads the dismallest things I ever heard."

"He is so young, ma'am," said Miss Challis; "young people who have had no great sorrows of their own can afford to be plaintive over those of others."

"Poor young friend! he looks delicate," observed the Quaker. "Ah! if the truth were to be told, we should find that he had griefs of his own."

Mrs. Bone leant her head to listen to the sounds which proceeded from the thin lips of Miss Peterson.

"Cousin—shop-lifting—tried for theft—hushed up—could not hold up his head for months."

These mysterious words produced a series of noddings, as if the company had turned into Chinese mandarins.

Poor Pleasance felt as if she were pilloried for public observation. She turned white and cold, whilst Mrs. Heathdale flushed painfully.

The ladies began to observe the signals of distress in the young girl's face.

"Drink some tea, Pleasance," whispered her friend. "I have no doubt, as her husband is at sea," she continued, "the loss of the 'Birkenhead' has affected her unhappily."

"I wonder the result did not come sooner, then," cried Miss Peterson, "for we had the whole story of James May after that."

"Probably friend Pleasance could not escape from the recollection of that sad shipwreck, which occupied her mind whilst Mr. Syer went to another subject."

"Take my smelling-bottle," suggested Miss Challis.

"I am quite well, ma'am, thank you," said Pleasance, looking up with eyes that seemed to plead to be spared observation.

"Now, Pleasance, we will go home, when you have finished your tea."

Pleasance folded up the little skirt of the child's frock she had been hemming, and pushed it along with the rest of the work, in the hope that imperfect stitches might be overlooked.

When Mrs. Heathdale and her charge had departed, the ladies put their heads together, and drained the teapot of its last drop of discoloured water.

"She is fair and of a goodly countenance," observed Mrs. Tweed; for though Pleasance had departed, she had, to console them for her absence, "left her character behind her."

"I cannot say," responded Miss Peterson, "that I see much to admire in her—a chitty-faced thing!"

"She is like a picture I saw at Rome—one of Guido's angels," murmured the Catholic lady.

"Magdalen, did you say?" cried the second Miss Peterson, with a titter.

"*Angel*, I said, Miss Peterson."

"Ladies!" cried Mrs. Bone, "she is the friend of Mrs. Heathdale, whose character is unimpeached, and who has lived in the best society before she came to ours."

Whether a sneer was, or was not, intended by Mrs. Bone, or an imputation that their society was only second best, so puzzled the rest of the company, that, not being able to make up their minds, they separated in a huff.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Many sources, both of mystery and love, meet in the infant life. A being so fresh from non-existence seems to promise us some tidings of the origin of souls. A being so visibly pressing forward into the future makes us think of their tendency.

PLEASANCE could not be prevailed on by Mrs. Heathdale to join the Dorcas meeting again. She felt that fourteen pairs of inquisitorial eyes had been fixed on her with suspicion. She was tried and found guilty of extreme youth and unusual beauty ; and she was unfortunately conscious that she had sinned, and believed that they would certainly detect her if they set to work with that intention.

"Pray let me stay at home, and try to improve myself for Edgar's sake. I know so little ; I have so much to learn."

Some months later Pleasance had experi-

ence of the pains and perils of childbirth; and after hours of suffering, which intensified all a mother's latent tenderness in Mrs. Heathdale, the little red-faced infant was laid on Pleasance's languidly beating breast, and, almost too much exhausted to feel the newborn happiness of her possession, she slept, with vague dreams of the roaring sea, and of Edgar struggling in the billows.

She fell at length into a deep sleep, and was awakened by her infant's faint cry, and the movement of its little frilled fist on her bosom.

Mrs. Heathdale — her second mother, as Pleasance called her — was at her bedside in a moment, to attend to the mother's child. Both women looked with love and admiration on the little morsel of fresh life, which had come to be an interest and a blessing to both these lonely females. Mrs. Heathdale felt with Coleridge —

“That for the mother's sake the child was dear,
And dearer was the mother for the child.”

The gallant lieutenant might have been a little jealous of that atom of a month old,

when she projected her upper lip for an instant into a coo, and then expanded her little mouth into a smile, her deep blue eyes sympathizing in infantine hilarity—but he would not long have grudged the small creature the love she received, but would probably have made one of the worshippers.

A month after, Pleasance sat up at the writing-table with an old-fashioned cradle on the carpet by her side, writing very slowly and painfully her first letter since her confinement to Edgar. How cramped it seemed! how long each letter took to make! She had certainly begun with pothooks and hangers too late in life.

Yet no difficulty appals love. She had tried day and night to write and to spell well; the spelling was more difficult than the writing, in the long run, and what endless work it was to look out for words in the dictionary.

She had made her hostess do the duty of one till that lady retreated to her own bedroom and locked the door, unable to resist the winning entreaties of Pleasance to be told,

yet convinced that the knowledge thus attained would never remain written on her brain, but would be effaced, like writing on sand, by the first breath which passed over it.

Her hand-writing, though rather cramped, was exceedingly beautiful—really caligraphic—a delicate Italian hand, such as our grandmothers used to write when the desire was to form each letter carefully, and when writing did not look like a succession of sloping iron palings—united by the transverse bar. For ladies for some time always darted a straight line out of the end of one word to give it the appearance of trying to reach its predecessor. The words of Pleasance ended without any flourish, and were carefully, almost timidly, correct.

She was wont to begin sedulously, with her little Johnson's dictionary at her side; but as she warmed to her work the writing and the spelling were less careful—I do not think Edgar, however, liked them less on that account.

“Oh! my Edgar! my love! my friend!”

she wrote ; “you cannot think how my longing is increased to have you at home, now I have a little child to show you—a beautiful tiny girl. Do not laugh because I say she is beautiful, and tell me all babes are alike. Her eyes are like yours, quite dark, and so will be her eye-lashes.

“I hold her tight against my breast, as if I feared some one might take her away, and then I peer out into the dull grey sky, where it joins the sea, and wish and wish that we could go like two spirits, mounting over every obstacle till we reached your ship.

“I try to fancy what you are doing now, perhaps walking up and down the deck, looking at the sky and the waves, and thinking of me, as I think ever of you—keeping watch must be sad work, unless you know that some one is always loving you and longing to see you again. I wonder how anyone can live when they have no one to love them—I think I should die—not at once, perhaps, but by degrees.

“I went to a tea-drinking with Mrs. Heathdale to make clothes for poor people ; I could not help thinking how glad my old grand-

mother would have been of one of the flannel petticoats the ladies were making. The clergyman read a story which he knew about a poor old labourer who had no money, no food, no wife to love him, no friend to give him shelter ; he was shoved about from one place to another, till he crawled down to a pond, hungry and weary, and laid his old withered face in the water and so was drowned.

“Edgar, if you had never come back to me, I should not have wanted to wail for the hunger and cold, and the muddy pool ; not to have been loved would have been a slow but certain death—women feel it, I suppose, more than men.

“But you will always love me, dear ! will you not ? and you will come home when you are a captain ; you will be easy then, and will not want to be any higher ? I don’t know, Mrs. Heathdale says her son will never rest till he has served six years as a post captain, that he may die an admiral, that he may at least once have his flag flying. What is the good of having a flag flying ? why, he might put up a flag on the roof of this house

if he liked, I suppose, and wanted to see it fly.

“My dear, what do you think of my writing? I can read your letters quite well now; do you not think it is improved? I was ashamed at first, because I had to ask Mrs. Heathdale to read them, but now they are as clear as the best printed testament. Edgar! I am so afraid my child when she grows to be a woman may find out all about me, and then! Oh! the shame not to be able to meet my girl’s eyes of reproach. I know now how sinful I was in taking that purse. It seems as if a veil was lifted from my eyes, and I know what is good and what is evil. I was so untaught—my darling babe shall never be made familiar with sinful acts, and when you come home we will bring her up together and train her to be an angel fit for heaven,

“Your

“PLEASANCE.”

LETTER SECOND.

“DEAREST E.,

“When I begin my letters to you, I feel shy, but after a bit I could go on writing

to you for ever. Mrs. Heathdale is very kind ; she has taught me to sew very nicely, and I have worked for you a pair of slippers in blue and orange diamond shapes ; they are made, and are in the top-drawer, covered with silver paper and brown paper over all ; I know they will fit you, for I have the size of the sole of your foot ; you will not guess how I got that. Months ago, before we married, when we had been wandering together on the beach, you had to go away in the boat and leave me. The tide was going out, and if you did not go at once you would not get back to the ship in time. You pushed off the boat with a violent shove, and then sprung into it, leaving me alone, with no comfort but looking at you till you disappeared and the waves grew too high between us, and then my eyes fell on the prints of your footsteps in the sands. At once I thought of something—I went back to the hut, and took a sheet of paper and granny's scissors, and I marked the shape of your foot, and cut it out and carried the paper on my breast till I feared it would wear out. When Mrs. Heathdale said she would teach

me lambswool work, I was so pleased that I had the exact size of that dear foot.

"You will think me a fool, Edgar. Yes, I am a fool about you. Who should forgive such silly love if not you, who are the object of it. I fear sometimes that my letters must seem very dull to one who sees foreign countries and hears strange tongues.

"Granny used to sing a song of which I often think,

"Should you some coast be laid on,
Where gold and diamonds grow,
You'll find a richer maiden,
But none who loves you so.'

"I wonder you should care to hear how everything goes on like clockwork in this quiet house. We breakfast at eight o'clock, exactly, Mrs. Heathdale reading prayers at ten minutes before that time. Then the infant has to be washed and dressed. I like to do that myself, but Mrs. Heathdale seems to think that no one can do it properly but herself. It is not very reasonable, because she never had but one child. However, I do

not like to vex her ; but last Sunday the bell rang for morning service before the child stirred, so Mrs. Heathdale hurried off to church, and I had it all my own way, for I could order the monthly nurse about as I liked. I wish I knew by what name you would like her to be christened. Your mother's name was Margaret, you told me. You are certain to love that name ! The infant ought to be taken to church before the monthly nurse leaves me.

“Your

“PLEASANCE.”

Edgar in his reply approved highly of the selection, and the infant was christened Margaret, which name happened to be also that of Mrs. Heathdale, who was her sponsor as godmother.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“When thy brother lies in languishing under the utmost extremity of poverty and distress, dost thou think to lick him whole again with only thy tongue?”—SOUTH.

PLEASANCE had leisure, and what was to the two ladies abundant wealth. Mrs. Heathdale was not insensible to the charm of little luxuries now freely indulged in without the dread of debt. The fires were piled in cold weather to the third bar of the grate, instead of dwindling to the lowest. Both women tasted the delight of communicating comfort to the poor around them. It must be admitted that the charity of Pleasance embraced a larger circle than that of her friend.

“My dear!” cried her hostess, one day, “I saw you come from that old creature Bierley’s

lodgings. Surely you have not been giving her charity?"

Pleasance looked up guiltily with her eyes tear-laden.

"I met Mr. Syer," she admitted, "and he told me that she was a worthless old woman, and did not deserve commiseration. She was cold, and hungry, and nearly naked."

Pleasance, like the slave girl in "Tristram Shandy," who was brushing away the flies, but not killing them, because she had known adversity, here leaned her head on the back of the chair on which she had seated herself and wept.

Memory recalled to her the cottage on the cliff, and the scantily-supplied deathbed of her grandmother, by which that death was hastened. She saw now, clearly, the mental degradation of the old woman, who desired her grandchild should become Mr. Pike's prey, that both she and Pleasance might be fed and clothed amply; but she remembered the magnitude of the temptation to one who was nearly starved, and but half clothed.

"Yes," she continued, clearing away the tears from her eyes and voice; "Mr. Syer

told me she was good for nothing ; but she has claims notwithstanding. She is eighty-two years old ; she has not food enough to eat, nor coals to keep her old bones from the cold."

"If you gave her money," said Mrs. Heathdale, angrily, "you would, if you took the trouble to watch her, see her go off to the public-house for half a pint of gin to get drunk on."

"Think, madam, if we had nothing but cold, hunger, and nakedness for our constant companions, what magic there would be in the few clear drops which would produce instant forgetfulness of all sorrow and want."

Mrs. Heathdale did not answer for a few moments, for Pleasance seemed obstinate; and surely, so long as she did not exceed her income, she had a right to give away its superfluity as she pleased.

"It was a fault on the right side," she said, excusing Pleasance to herself; but she did not know how deeply the girl had drunk of the bitterness of poverty, nor how the living old woman in her destitution had reminded her of the one who was dead.

Pleasance mingled with her kind only when on her visits of charity. The Dorcas meetings were an abomination to her. The members of it seemed always scrutinizing her. Her past culpability, always held in her sensitive memory, transformed the assembly of women into a company of inexorable judges bent on her conviction and disgrace. She would not inflict herself on these women, so proud of their implacability. When she went amongst the poor, they hailed her approach with delight,—it meant food, or money to procure that and drink. If she went to the Dorcas meeting, the women looked as if they hated her; and many of them did so. Her youth, her beauty, her having married so young, and the unmistakable signs of an easy income, which her friend appeared to have possessed since Pleasance had resided with her, made four unpardonable faults in their eyes.

Pleasance was incessant in her self-culture. She was importunate in her entreaties to her hostess to stop her ruthlessly when she sinned in grammar, pronunciation, or tone. Her reason convinced her that it was her only

chance of preventing a feeling of shame on Edgar's part, when on his return he went with her into the company of his equals or superiors. She had even a stronger motive—the desire to educate her child for the first few years of her young life. To accomplishments, Pleasance made no pretension, but in the solid parts of information she thought by careful and unremitting study she might succeed and even excel.

It was a trial of the sweetness of her temper to be constantly stopped to correct the manner of her information, when the matter interested her deeply. Sometimes she became irritated, and thought her instructress over particular.

“Oh, Mrs. Heathdale!” she cried, coming in eagerly, “I have bought tew such bootiful little images for the chimbly-piece.”

“My dear Pleasance!” with a start of pretended horror, “tew! What word is that?—Devonshire dialect for two? Bootiful, for beautiful; and chimbly, for chimney.”

Pleasance looked disconcerted.

“And, my dear, you should say statuettes, instead of ‘little images.’”

Pleasance was disappointed, and a little out of temper.

"I suppose if one is to be quite correct, one should say bowtiful, for I suppose it comes from beau, French for handsome."

"No; you should pronounce it as well-educated people do, in English, which is nearer be-u-tiful than any other sound. Do you not think you would like little Margaret to be perfectly correct in thought, word, and deed? and will it not be a privilege for her to learn this from her own mother?"

"You are quite right, Mrs. Heathdale," said Pleasance, with a sigh, "but I have so much to learn, and when I grow eager, I forget so. I shall never be fit for well-educated people, never be able to teach little Margaret properly."

"You are very much improved, my dear; another year will make you much more perfect. But where are the statuettes?" cried the lady, anxious to divert her mind from the lecture she had just received.

A ring of the bell announced the arrival of the purchase, which Sally brought up in a little box packed in bran.

Mrs. Heathdale was afraid she might find two images staring in red, blue, and yellow paint—vulgar and common. Pleasance was quite prepared for her friend's dislike of her purchase—she had been so cowed by Mrs. Heathdale's fault-finding with her parts of speech; but that lady was relieved when, the powdery covering being removed and blown away, a graceful figure of Lesbia was revealed, in *biscuit*, turning her beautiful head to caress the sparrow on her shoulder.

An expression of softened pleasure stole over Mrs. Heathdale's face as she looked at it.

"You extravagant little puss!" she cried, unable to conceal her satisfaction.

Pleasance was consoled, but when the companion figure was revealed, the elder lady uttered a sigh of intense admiration. A nymph stooping over a little boy, who, on tip-toe, was trying to drink water out of her hand. An antique vase near explained the action.

"Oh, Pleasance, that is an exquisite composition!"

"They are for you, dear lady, you know,"

cried the girl, growing crimson with nervousness and gladness.

"How my dear son will admire them! his taste is so correct!" cried the mother.

"Do you not think Edgar will like them, too?" Pleasance asked, timidly.

"He cannot fail to do so," the lady replied; and they were placed on the chimney-piece, which Sally was duly warned not to dust in future, lest any accident might happen from careless handling.

Three years must pass before the son and the husband could be expected to return; but they were not unhappy to either the mother and wife, or to the two sailors on board their ship. The latter had the exercise of the profession which they loved best. The women in their quiet home had enough money for their simple wants for the first time in their lives, and they had the baby to worship—that strong, handsome child, who never cared to cry even when she was cutting her teeth, and threw off all infantile diseases when they attacked her, "like dewdrops from the lion's mane."

Edgar's love for his young wife knew no

diminution, but rather increased, when every succeeding mail brought in Pleasance's letters proofs of the gradual refining and cultivation of her mind and tastes. There is a tenderness and chivalry in the mind of a sailor—the result probably of seclusion from all but their companions on the world of waters—which tends to the deification of the beloved object. Lord Byron says of women that if the outline be but fair enough,

“They can transfigure brighter than a Raphael,”

and it is thus with sailors.

The outline was beautiful and delicate in Pleasance. The want of cultivation, which threatened to be a source of sorrow and mortification to him, was fast disappearing, if it had not entirely vanished. The youth of Pleasance had made her impressionable. Living with Mrs. Heathdale was in itself an education.

Pleasance used the same choice language now, from association with her companion, as did that lady herself. She spoke with the same repose of manner, and schooled her lips to the same intonation.

The legacy left by Edgar's friend had relieved him as to any anxiety for his wife and child. The bonds of friendship with Lieutenant Heathdale were more closely serried by their mutual interest in that small house in the English seaport. They would have liked to return to it more frequently, but the notion of living at home entirely would have been intolerable to the midshipman, as to the more experienced lieutenant. In his lighter hours the commander of the vessel used to say, jestingly, "Ship is first — then, my wife."

Edgar used to deny this in his own mind as apostacy from the beloved image which accompanied him during the day and haunted his slumbers at night; but the thought of being on half pay, even with dear Pleasance and little Margaret, whilst Heathdale was employed and working on to that desired haven of a ship over which a flag should brave the battle and the breeze, made him recoil with distaste from the picture of home comfort and home safety.

Margaret was about two years old when the ship had served on the station three

years. The two officers, Heathdale and Petrel, expected their promotion on returning to England. Mrs. Heathdale and Pleasance were in a continual flutter of preparation. The drawing-room curtains were taken down, picked to pieces, and re-dyed.

"Edward likes to see things look neat," she said.

Pleasance thought the house was always the perfection of neatness and comfort, and had not been disturbed by the strip of faded blue in the lining of the chintz, that had grieved her friend's eye and vexed her heart. Pleasance was speculating in what colour Edgar would like her best. Blue, she supposed: all sailors liked blue. She dared not intrude her own anxiety on her friend whilst the knotty point of furniture was unsettled.

At length—when the muslin curtains had been darned so neatly by Pleasance that the defect became a grace, in the likeness of an additional flower; when they had been returned from the wash, and the brass rings re-sewn on them; when the chintz had been properly calendered, and its lining dyed to

its original cerulean tint ; whilst the ladies sat with their knees in juxtaposition, supporting the folds of drapery on which their needles twinkled in incessant occupation—Pleasance ventured to ask Mrs. Heathdale what colour the new dress should be, which she must buy to receive Edgar.

“My dear, surely you cannot *want* a new dress.”

Middle-aged ladies have always that impression as regards their younger sisters.

“Perhaps I do not absolutely *want* it, but I should very much like to have it,” Pleasance admitted ; she had learnt that to be strictly truthful was a necessity to those connected with the officers of Her Majesty’s navy.

Mrs. Heathdale looked at her blooming cheeks, with the golden hair falling over them in rich rings as she bent over the sewing, and thought, “She is but a girl, scarcely nineteen : her little vanity is very excusable.”

“Certainly, dear. Of what colour do you wish it to be, and of what material ?”

Then followed the discussions as to textures and tints. Pleasance would like blue, but

then she supposed it ought to be navy blue, and navy blue was the darkest of any.

"My dear," observed Mrs. Heathdale, "the weather is still chilly. I think a dark blue merino would suit your complexion admirably. We will get some patterns, with prices. There is Margaret, too, she must have a pair of red morocco shoes to show papa. They ought to be here before the end of March, and this is the eighteenth of the month."

"I am so glad we live on the coast," Pleasance observed. "It would be terrible not to be able to know it as soon as the ship comes in."

"So true is that observation," said the elder lady, "that I settled here first to be near my husband, and then to be near Edward; and it has ever been a comfort to me to know that I must get the earliest news of those I love best."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“ And are ye sure the news is true,
And are ye sure he’s weel ?”

THEIR days were now passed in questioning with their eager eyes the surface of the ocean for the expected ship, sometimes from the windows of the house, sometimes from the pier, on which they daily lingered till nothing could be perceived in the distant union of sea and sky.

“ Why she *can’t* be in till to-morrow, not due, d’ye see ?” said an old sailor, who seemed to be ever watching for coming vessels, and who was “ on the look out ” from the first eastern dawn till twilight.

At length, one morning, as the first night mists cleared away, Mrs. Heathdale touched Pleasance gently on the shoulder as she was

sleeping, with little Margaret on one arm, and the other thrown over her, as if to shield her from all harm.

"Pleasance!" cried the anxious mother, in a flutter of emotion; "Pleasance! there are five great ships in the offing, where there were but four when we watched last evening."

Pleasance looked up, rather dazed. Margaret had been restless during the night.

"Oh, you don't mean to say they are come? that the ship is come?" she cried, removing her arm gently from under the sleeping child, and starting up to get out of bed.

"No; I am not sure it is the ship, but I think it may be. At all events, let us dress and go out and inquire."

Pleasance looked at little Margaret, who must not be disturbed; and when she had finished her toilette hurriedly, she summoned Sally to sit by the child till her return.

They had not taken a child's maid, as much from a jealousy lest any one but themselves should touch that precious creature, as from a wish to save the expense of an extra servant.

When both ladies were ready, they went to

the pier, and found the old sailor just lifting his glass to his eye.

"Is it the *Isis*?—Are you sure it is the *Isis*?" Pleasance asked, with a thickly beating heart, of which she seemed to hear the thumping.

The old salt took his time to reconnoitre the ship. Then he spoke slowly—

"Yes; that's the *Isis*, sure enough. She has cast anchor just inside of the breakwater."

"Oh, Mrs. Heathdale!" cried Pleasance, all in a flutter, "let us take a boat and go off to the vessel."

"Have patience, my dear; it will seem so impatient. They will come on shore as soon as they can get leave."

"Oh! do let us go; we have no leave to ask of any one. Who shall stop a wife from her husband?—a mother from her son? Let us go at once!"

"Do you want a boat to go off at once, ma'am?" cried the sailor. "There's James Limey, close by, will be happy to take you for a couple of sovereigns. You see the waves are rather boisterous; very like the

boats from the vessel will not come ashore till the swell goes down. It was a rough night ; but if you don't fear——”

“Oh ! let us go, Mrs. Heathdale. I *must* go myself,” cried Pleasance, growing desperate. “I do not fear the rough sea. I will tell Mr. Heathdale that you are waiting for him. Perhaps he will come sooner.”

“He cannot come, my dear, till he gets leave. There are other sons and husbands on board. If they all left the ship as soon as she came into port, who would remain to see that the duty was done ? You are so impatient and unreasonable,” she continued, anxious to go, but thinking that Edward might not like it.

“We need not go on board. If they would just come and give us a look over the side, it would be enough,” cried Pleasance.

Mrs. Heathdale gave way. The old sailor saw the relenting in her countenance, and ran to tell James Limey to call his mate and prepare his boat. Before he returned he had borrowed a couple of waterproof cloaks, with which, with nautical gallantry, he covered the shoulders of each lady.

"'Tis for protection from the spray—it wets so," he said.

Then he assisted the women into the boat, and watched them dancing on the top of the breakers, and then sinking into the depth of the sea, till they were no longer visible.

Mrs. Heathdale and Pleasance were too eager to be frightened. Their desire to meet their long-severed objects of affection made them careless of the danger which really existed.

"Do you think we shall win her?" (*i.e.* the ship) asked one sailor of the other.

"Just; and that's all; but the wind's going down, 'twill be smoother going back."

They neared the noble ship. Pleasance looked with awe on the high, black-ribbed wall, against which the waves threatened to dash the frail boat which held the two women. The boatmen protected it from contact by extending their oars.

"Boat ahoy!" they shouted.!

Some youthful heads in caps looked over the side.

"Who is wanted?" cried the treble voice of a midshipman.

Pleasance cried, "Mr. Petrel."

Mrs. Heathdale said, "Lieutenant Heathdale."

The boatmen shouted the names, for the feeble voices of the women were borne away on the breeze.

There was a withdrawal of the head, and a long pause. Then an officer looked over the side of the vessel, and said to the boatmen—

"Take the ladies on shore. Lieutenant Heathdale and Midshipman Petrel are not on board; they will return in the course of the day."

The words were some of them indistinct. "Not on board" was clear; "In the course of the day" was distinguishable; but the others not so much so. It seemed to have been uttered by doubting lips.

The boatmen pushed their little craft from its dangerous proximity to the *Isis*, and turned her head homewards. The men looked downcast, wondering at the circumstance. The women were silent from dread.

"Not on board!" cried Pleasance; "what can that mean?"

"Perhaps they may have been sent by the captain with orders to some of the other large vessels here," muttered the mother, trying to reassure herself and her companion.

"Oh!" said the young wife, gasping; "it *cannot* be that anything could have happened to them *both*."

"Happened to them! Of course not," Mrs. Heathdale replied, with white shaking lips.

They were rowed in silence to the shore, and the elder lady put her hand in her pocket and gave the money to the owners of the boat.

"The gentlemen will come on shore directly, no doubt, and we have had our row for nothing," she said to them, with an attempt at an unconcerned smile which flickered sadly over her face. So accustomed, however, was Pleasance to rely on her friend, that she was reassured, though the grumbling, inarticulate reply of the men showed *they* were not taken in, and that they feared something was wrong.

In ascending the slope from the beach, Mrs. Heathdale felt suffocated, and feared she should not reach the house without falling. She *must* get home, she felt. It was the

feeling which drives the hurt or wounded animal to his lair.

Sally opened the door when Pleasance rang the bell.

"Where are our gentlemen?" she said, looking behind the women, in the expectation of seeing her master, as she called him.

"They are not come yet, Sally," Mrs. Heathdale replied, gently; "we must wait for them."

"In the course of the day," added Pleasance. "Oh!" she exclaimed, with a cry of half-restrained agony, "God grant that they may not be long coming!"

Pleasance felt that life could not be endured in its present phase. She went upstairs, heavy-footed with terrible apprehension. Little Margaret was flattening her face against the window-pane, and babbling—"Pap—a, pap—a," as Pleasance had taught her. Her mother caught her to her breast, and, leaning her face over the child's dark curling hair, burst into an hysterical passion of shrieks and laughter.

Mrs. Heathdale hastened to the drawing-room, and, sending Margaret away with Sally,

she occupied herself in efforts to arrest the paroxysm.

"My dear," she said, "we are both in terrible anxiety. It is useless to conceal the cause. I think we exaggerate it, for we are two feeble women, dwelling always on our own hopes and wishes. We saw that the grand 'old vessel was safe; England is at peace, so our dear ones could not have been mowed down by shot or shell. It is unlikely, very, that both should have sickened and died; and but a few days since we had letters of recent dates, speaking of their perfect health. It seems most likely that my suggestion was the right one, and that the boat which Mr. Petrel calls his has taken them to some other vessel with a message from the captain. I will go and order dinner for them; they will be here by one o'clock; and Pleasance, wash your poor eyes, lest"—(with a vain attempt at a jest)—"your husband should think I have been beating you."

Pleasance looked up to try to find a conviction of cause of comfort in Mrs. Heathdale's face, and failed. She obeyed her injunctions notwithstanding, and then planted

herself at the window to watch for the sparse glitter and dark blue of naval uniforms. At length in the distance she thought she discovered a figure like that of a naval officer—more like Lieutenant Heathdale, however, than like Edgar. She cried out in a low voice, “Mrs. Heathdale! Mrs. Heathdale! I think your son is coming!”

Mrs. Heathdale was looking from the upper window at the same object, and did not hear her.

END OF VOL. I.

